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General Assembly

Seventy-third session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Address by Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cabo Verde.

Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fonseca (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election, and wish you great success as you embark on your noble and challenging mission. I also wish to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, of the Republic of Slovakia, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, for his excellent work during his term.

Next, I would like to express my utmost appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his smart and competent stewardship of our common house, and to reaffirm our full trust and profound respect for his leadership, particularly amid the many difficulties that the world currently faces. I am referring, for example, to terrorism, which is spreading in many countries; the migration crisis, particularly on the African continent, from where we get news, virtually every day, of young people, children and women who have abandoned their homes out of desperation and ventured into the world in search of a better life only to face subhuman conditions; the impact of climate change on human security; conflicts and other threats to peace coming to us from all quarters of the world; and the glaring situation of poverty, which continues to be a reality that puts our global capacity to leave no one behind to the test.

In order to mitigate those and other problems that all of us present here in this Assembly face, the United Nations has worked tirelessly under the leadership of our Secretary-General, to whom I would like to express, once again, our profound gratitude. To address those problems, the President of the General Assembly could not have proposed a more appropriate theme for her presidency than "Making the United Nations relevant to all people", while also promoting multilateralism, which I define here as combining efforts and taking a path to global leadership and shared responsibilities in order to build the peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies that we all desire.

We will celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December. However, hate, discrimination and violence are still alive and present. As the Director-General of UNESCO has stated:

> "Hundreds of millions of women and men are destitute, deprived of basic livelihoods and opportunities. Forced population movements are violating rights on an unprecedented scale. The 2030

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Agenda for Sustainable Development promises to leave no one behind — human rights must be the bedrock for all progress moving forward."

The date of 10 December, Human Rights Day, is strategically important in that human rights have established a universal standard for society to achieve, one that is globally inclusive and socially emancipating, enabling all human beings to realize their free and full development. The fact that universal standards and principles of human rights are integral to the legal order of many countries is a major advancement for humankind. However, that does not mean that such standards and principles are fully and effectively accepted. In fact, human rights achievements translate into a framework of rights that combine with cultural or historical conditions to weave a non-linear history that is at times contradictory but always open and never-ending.

Respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights therefore constitutes an unquestionably noble goal and, at the same time, remains one of the greatest challenges of our time. Although the struggle for its effectiveness is intensifying, violations have virtually been institutionalized in many parts of the world. Such violations have also been observed in situations of war, which unfortunately afflicts many parts of the world, especially Africa, taking on unacceptable dimensions through increasingly common practices such as human trafficking, including the trafficking of children, organized transnational crime and acts of genocide and other war crimes. Despite those unfavourable conditions, we raise the banner of hope and fight to defend and promote fundamental human rights, driven, above all, by our faith in the capacity of humankind to creatively mould reality to our will, notwithstanding causalities and constraints.

Our country's choice to pursue a policy of peace, dialogue and understanding to prevent and resolve conflicts acknowledges and reflects those values. Furthermore, it emanates from the very nature of the Cabo Verdean people — from the culture of tolerance that has allowed our policies to be shaped by such values and principles over four decades of history as a sovereign nation. In our day-to-day lives, we have demonstrated that tolerance is possible and that the sharing of values is a reality, even in the face of adversity.

We profoundly regret to see that the death penalty still exists in many countries around the world. The existence of the death penalty in the twenty-first century demands profound, careful and responsible reflection from all of us. It is a fact that the search for a new universal conscience will lead us to rethink our understanding of the purposes and motivations behind human coexistence, but they should always be based on respect for life and the immanent dignity of human beings.

The Constitution and justice system of Cabo Verde do not provide for life sentences or the death penalty. In fact, the death penalty has not been applied in our country since before the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Our unique historical and social condition has instilled in us cultural principles and values that promote the right to life under all circumstances. In that regard, we wish to reiterate our absolute support for the recent appeal by Pope Francis to the conscience of State authorities around the world to seek an international consensus on the abolition of the death penalty. In addition to calling for the unequivocal, firm and exemplary repudiation of capital punishment, Pope Francis also spoke against the so-called extrajudicial executions, or illegal killings that are being committed.

In the name of clemency and prudence, we firmly believe that capital punishment is not an appropriate and fair instrument, nor is it efficient in achieving justice, in the light of its insurmountable conditionalities and weaknesses. As a superior value, life cannot be left at the mercy of presumably fallible judges, who, unaware of the laws of clemency, imprudently insist on donning the soiled robe of the executioner, succumbing to the dim light cast by a law that, in terms of relative values, is certainly not above the value of life and the ethics that it embodies.

Moreover, we also believe that, based on an unwavering and optimistic anthropology, human beings can be rehabilitated and that, in the modern world, there exist institutional conditions and less grievous forms of punishment that are still suitable and effective and which avoid the shameful radical solution of ending the life of a fellow human being. Viewing criminal justice in the context of the rule of law, capital punishment is therefore unjustifiable. It is along those lines that we fully subscribe to the plea by the Holy Father Pope Francis for a universal moratorium on executions.

Through the 43 years of its independence, Cabo Verde, a small island State with major shortages of resources, is proud to be a democratic country built on

the rule of law through the sacrifice and determination of Cabo Verdeans residing in the country and abroad. I believe that my country can contribute, even if modestly, to the quest for solutions to major problems that currently afflict our troubled world. More than a model of the political stability that characterizes our country or of the democratic regime that we have built and consolidated, the nation of Cabo Verde, which predates the creation of the Cabo Verdean State, may be considered an example of peaceful coexistence among people from different countries and with different beliefs who have been blended into a unique and diverse culture that is open to the world and to the sharing of values.

Without any pretence or false modesty, I am also proud of our country's journey from independence to the present day. In fact, I can say that, according to the human, economic and financial indices, our country's achievements have been favourably received by major international institutions, particularly those in the financial arena. However, with our country's service-based economy, its very small market and an agricultural sector that is struggling against desertification and scarce rainfall, we cannot ignore our significant vulnerabilities, and we note that we must not rest because we have graduated to middle-income-country status. Indeed, we believe that we must not lose sight of the fact that our economy continues to be very dependent and that it cannot absorb a large number of our workers, with all the social effects that that entails, which is why we continue to rely on international solidarity. Naturally, we must also increase our reliance on domestic resources, develop through public-private partnerships and become more effective in fighting extreme poverty, social exclusion and unemployment, particularly among young people, thereby promoting growth and development in Cabo Verde.

Our constraints with respect to energy, water, health and sanitation, to name just a few areas, will require our continued attention, and we will need to build the necessary infrastructure to create the conditions for ensuring our economy's sustainable growth. Similarly, as we look to our future, we must also consider the increasingly disastrous impacts that climate change and other natural disasters are having on the world, particularly on small island developing States.

Cabo Verde graduated to a middle-income country in 2008, when the world was gripped by a major international financial crisis, which contributed to our missing the window of opportunity created by our graduation. Since then, the structural vulnerabilities afflicting our country have become not only aggravated but also more complex. We see this situation in our growing regional asymmetries, which are exacerbated by the lack of territorial continuity that goes with being an island nation, the nefarious effects of drought, desertification and other climate changes, as well as weak production capacity, unemployment of young people, social and gender inequalities, the excessive burden of external debt on the budget, and the difficulties in internally connecting our country by air and sea, which hampers the creation of a competitive and coherent market, which is essential for developing tourism. Such facts convince us of the relevance of and need for support measures that are distinct and adjusted to the realities of our country in the areas of development, trade and foreign debt.

Finally, we call for more substantial inclusion of and a greater voice for developing countries within the United Nations system, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and other institutions in line with the work that is already being pursued. To that end, in December 2018, the Government of Cabo Verde will convene a round table in Paris to make an appeal for the mobilization of innovative partnerships that are consistent with our reality as a small island developing State. Cabo Verde will want to hear what our development partners think of the relevance of our proposals and options, and to discuss forms of cooperation with them, in close coordination with our agreed national efforts, including the alignment of our national development plan with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. We therefore count on the support of the members of the Assembly on Cabo Verde's journey towards the sustainable development for which we all strive.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cabo Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini.

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati III: It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, where we have come to renew our commitment to creating an enabling environment for all humankind.

The theme of this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", has great resonance with resolution 72/279, adopted on 31 May, which aims at the repositioning of the United Nations development system to better support countries in their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under strong national leadership and with international cooperation.

When the United Nations was established in 1945, its main purpose was to reduce tensions and avert another conflict following the Second World War. Since then, we have converged as a family at the General Assembly to renew this commitment and analyse how we address challenges affecting the world. It is a time to assess whether we are still living up to the ethos of the founders, who sought to ensure that the world would never again endure another world war, but rather find peaceful solutions to resolving possible conflicts.

We are all aware of the pockets of tension existing in different regions of the world, which require that States Members of the United Nations speak with one voice when offering possible peaceful solutions. Since a fragmented approach would render peaceful solutions elusive for affected countries, it is imperative that we engage and resolve issues together as the United Nations family in order to ensure that we end up with lasting solutions.

We appeal to the countries experiencing conflict situations to come up with home-grown solutions to address their differences. We urge these nations to avoid the use of force in an attempt to impose change. Where they do not see eye to eye, they need to adopt dialogue as the best way to find lasting solutions. Where there is no loss of blood, unity prevails, whereas violence begets instability.

Those who have lost lives and property in conflicts do not forget, and their bitterness makes nation-building efforts much harder to achieve. States Members of the United Nations are strongly urged to avoid fuelling tensions in troubled countries with a divided approach to intervention, as that defeats the purpose of the establishment of the United Nations. Our approach should always be, for the greater good of humankind, to search for and find an amicable way forward to address all the challenges we face.

Another great concern is the imbalance between rich and poor, which continues to deepen by the day despite our efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, which were designed to bridge that divide. As the United Nations family, we need to pay serious attention to those imbalances, as they contribute to terrorism and social strife in the world.

The African Union has also set out to improve lives with the goal of realizing a well-developed Africa for all by 2063. It is important to support such programmes, which are similar to initiatives undertaken in other regions of the world, some of which have shown great progress in that regard. We urge successful blocs to meaningfully support developing countries that have adopted good programmes to transform their economies but lack the means to do so. The slow process of development in such countries adds to the burden resulting from their failure to provide for the needs of our people and our society. We need to find ways and solutions to speed up the process of developing sustainable economies by removing the stumbling blocks to development, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is perhaps time that we engage researchers to find out what developing countries need in order to fast-track economic growth and identify high-turnover capital projects that would be best suited to catalyse such an endeavour. No country deserves to go for a whole year without any investment. There are numerous successful countries that can share their experiences of success. Their insights could assist developing countries in ensuring that no country is left behind as we strive to achieve our development objectives.

The African continent remains challenged by various diseases, including Ebola, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and many others, each of which requires large amounts of funding if they are to be overcome. Africa has resolved to eliminate those diseases in a short amount of time. However, without funding, that will remain a challenge. Some of those health issues require further analysis given that, in some cases where we have had success, we subsequently had to deal with their re-emergence in a more virulent form.

It would be remiss of us not to thank and commend the support lent by members of the United Nations family to countries in need, especially for health issues in Africa. We need to ensure that every citizen has access to basic services, such as clean water, health care and free primary education. We commend those countries that have reached the level of being able to provide free education. It is only by investing in education that nations may produce the highly qualified citizenry that enables them to realize their full development potential.

Reducing unemployment is a global challenge, so too is caring for the elderly, a group that has contributed immensely to the development of each country. They deserve to be cared for once they have done their part. Addressing those issues is becoming increasingly challenging given the decline in donor funding, which means more hardship for our people. We should therefore seek alternative means of fundraising so as to avoid the undesirable situation in which people have to resort to self-help in order to cope with the global challenges. Such an approach threatens peace, as it could lead to the diversion of resources from efforts in place to address already existing challenges, such as diseases.

It is unfortunate that the African continent continues to attract more United Nations peacekeeping missions than any other region in the world, which qualifies Africa for proper representation in the peace and security arena and makes it a key player in discussions on issues of peace and security in all structures of the United Nations. We therefore make the appeal for Africa not to be left behind. Its voice must be heard and featured prominently and permanently at the United Nations.

As negotiations of reform of the Security Council progress, the Kingdom of Eswatini calls for the favourable consideration of the African common position, as well as the support of those countries that are not members of the Security Council. Africa calls for the allocation of no less than two permanent seats on the Security Council, with all of the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership — including the veto power — and five non-permanent seats.

We remain confident that the SDGs and Agenda 2063 of the African Union will continue to give us the proper guidance and impetus needed to eradicate poverty and create inclusive and sustainable development for all. The Kingdom of Eswatini has made significant strides in adapting the SDGs at the local level and integrating them into its national planning processes. We have finalized a review of our 1997-2022 national development strategy and will soon be launching a revised national strategy with the theme "Development strategy for Eswatini: promoting sustainable development and inclusive growth". The strategy is expected to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs in the Kingdom.

In a bid to facilitate research and development, the Kingdom of Eswatini is fully committed to working towards a knowledge-based economy through the development of science, technology and innovation infrastructure. The Royal Science and Technology Park continues to be a key entity aimed at advancing research in the scientific and related fields. We would like to express our profound gratitude to the friends of the Kingdom who are supporting us in our endeavour to develop those fundamental initiatives. However, as innovation, research and development are constantly evolving, such efforts are a work in progress. The Kingdom therefore continues to seek additional support so as to further strengthen initiatives that contribute to attaining our national Vision 2022 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Only a few days ago, the people of the Kingdom of Eswatini held a very peaceful national election that was free and fair. We are glad that international observers were in attendance to monitor the elections and that their conclusions were in line with our expectations. During the elections, the people nominated candidates in their chiefdoms to compete at the constituency level, using a system we call Tinkhundla. The system ensures direct participation and promotes participatory democracy among our people. It is home grown, part of our customs and traditions, and enshrined in our Constitution.

We fully support the participation of women in political decision-making positions and have recently

enacted the Election of Women Members to the House of Assembly Act in order to ensure their representation in Parliament. We have also successfully enacted the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act, a legal framework to protect women from domestic violence and sexual assault. That legislation will give effect to the relevant international legal instruments, including, inter alia, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

We are pleased to inform the General Assembly that, earlier this year, our Kingdom celebrated 50 years of independence. We are grateful that the country has been able to champion its development agenda as a free nation for 50 years. During the celebration, the nation decided to revert to its original name, Eswatini. Since time immemorial, the name of the Kingdom has always been Eswatini.

I would like to emphasize that the call of the United Nations to leave no one behind requires identifying them, knowing where they are and understanding how they live, as well as determining how they can be assisted and brought to par with the rest of the world. Answering those questions will go a long way towards making the United Nations more relevant to all peoples of the world.

We would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the negative impact that being categorized as a middle-income country has had on our access to external resources. Our designation as a middle-income country has come at a time when we need even more resources to be able to inject innovation into the development programmes that we have undertaken pursuant to the SDGs. We sincerely hope that the commendable reform efforts of the Secretary-General will help to support and strengthen our efforts aimed at gaining access to external resources and securing sustainable funding mechanisms so as to enable us to move towards fully realizing the SDGs by 2030.

Mr. Barry (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Kingdom of Eswatini reiterates its unwavering stance as it calls on the United Nations to afford the people of the Republic of China, Taiwan, the opportunity to contribute to and partake in the United Nations development system. Taiwan's experience in fields that are vital to various dimensions of sustainable development would go a long way towards contributing to the work and well-being of the membership of the United Nations. We wish to make a strong appeal for the people of Taiwan not to be left behind, with a view to keeping the United Nations relevant to all people, in line with the spirit of universality.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my congratulations to the President of the General Assembly on her election to preside at the seventy-third session of the Assembly. We commend the General Assembly for having such confidence in her as to choose her to serve as only the fourth woman President of the General Assembly in its 73 years of existence. I would like to assure her of my Kingdom's full support as she executes her duties and responsibilities during her term of office. We further appreciate the Secretary-General and all his staff for their continued support and hard work to improve the working mechanisms and relevance of the United Nations system for all Member States. We hope to come out of this session with meaningful goals that will chart a better future for our respective countries.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini for the statement he has just made.

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Poroshenko: On behalf of Ukraine, I congratulate the President on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We support the outlined priorities and are ready to do our part in translating them into reality.

Our deliberations are taking place at a defining moment for the United Nations. Despite the universal

appeal for peace and a declared commitment to upholding it, wars and armed conflicts remain our reality. Conflicts are the main reason for the increase in number of refugees and displaced persons worldwide — to the unprecedented figure of 65.5 million. Since no peace means no development, hundreds of millions are doomed to misery.

The international security environment seemed rock solid less than two decades ago. It has now descended into a volatile and increasingly disturbing state of affairs, where both traditional and hybrid threats challenge the stability of our societies. Too often, lofty rhetoric on peace, respect for international law and commitment to human rights remains precisely that: rhetoric — nice sounding words and politically correct messages that are not backed by concrete action.

We may be tempted to talk about achievements or grand plans for the future, yet, from our perspective, it is much more important to address the fundamental problems faced by the United Nations and the international community as a whole. We will never forget that the raison d'être of the Organization is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Unfortunately, my fellow citizens have become part of that one fifth of the world population that is experiencing the horrors of war. As I deliver my address, reports have brought the sad news of another human life lost on the front lines of a war that has been inflicted on my country by a permanent member of the Security Council. Yesterday and the day before, several families were again struck by grief as their loved ones perished as a result of Russia's hostile attacks. Moscow turns Ukrainians into orphans, it tortures our patriots in its prisons, and more than 1.5 million people have become internally displaced persons who still cannot return to their homes.

Russia continues to multiply the human tragedy, which recently took on a new dimension: ecological. It is poisoning Ukrainian soil and causing environmental disasters, not only in occupied Crimea but also in the Donbas region. That has been a daily reality for Ukrainians for four years now: thousands of deaths, destruction, displacement and human suffering. For my fellow citizens, those years have been a tremendous challenge and a test of their determination, solidarity, resilience and faith.

Let us not forget what this war is about. Ukraine made a sovereign decision to live on its own terms and promote a freer world based on democratic values and rules. Russia is punishing Ukraine for that decision. It kills, destroys homes, and tells lies on a massive scale. It claims that Ukraine and Georgia have attacked themselves. Do we know which one of Russia's neighbours will be the next to attack itself, or will countries around the world be comfortably numb in the hope that they will not be next?

As we defend Ukraine's land and our freedom of choice, and as we counter the resurgent neo-imperialist Power that is willing to divide the world anew, we are also defending the free world. The United Nations should not remain silent while the values and principles rooted in its Charter, as well as the entire body of international law, are being violated by a country with the veto power. This is not just a challenge, but a chance to make the United Nations relevant and the motto of this session of the General Assembly work.

How did such a deterioration in world affairs come about? Many assume that respect for peace and international law is a constant given. Developments on the international stage over the past decade have seriously undermined such confidence. Appeasement and quick fixes to difficult problems have proved to be false options. It has been proved that staying comfortably silent when international norms are breached does nothing but encourage the offender to continue its destructive policies. The world's silence is exactly what the Kremlin weaponizes against Ukraine and, ultimately, against all of us.

It is naive to believe that safe shores will always be found. There will be no safe shores if we allow someone to feel that he or she will not be bound by any norms or restrictions, that he or she has a right to reshape the international system to his or her liking, or that his or her interests are more legitimate than ours. In the absence of a strong and united reaction, an extremely irresponsible and selfish actor resorts to the tactic of further escalation, which creates new crises, raises the stakes, and blackmails other countries and even entire international organizations — all in an effort to get away with murder. We shall not allow this to happen. We will put the world back on track.

What is the cure? In a word, it is responsibility. The ability of the international community to ensure systemic and unerring responsibility for each and every violation of international law — including, first and foremost, the norms and principles of the Charter of

the United Nations — is the benchmark measuring how successful we as a family of nations can be in achieving our shared goals. Ensuring responsibility is never an easy feat. Let me be absolutely clear on the following point: nothing will stop Moscow from continuing its aggressive, expansionist policies if it does not face a united stand by the international community and punishment for its actions does not become inevitable. It is due to the lack of relevant punishment that after Georgia came Ukraine, after Litvinenko came the Skripals and after Aleppo came Idlib.

The Kremlin has no intention of stopping. Following the occupation of Crimea, it now aims to occupy the Sea of Azov, situated between Ukraine and Russia, and, having illegally constructed a bridge across the Kerch Strait, Russia launched its systematic disruption of Ukrainian and foreign ships and the freedom of international navigation through the Strait. Such brutal actions must be rejected as illegal, including under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. They require a strong response, including an enhanced sanctions policy and other targeted measures.

The efficiency of international actions often falls short of expectations, and the relevance of the United Nations itself is called into question. We must admit that the responsibility for resolving the current state of affairs rests on all of us, both collectively and individually. If we are committed to building peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, we must protect the Charter of the United Nations, uphold its norms and principles and take resolute action to restore justice.

Let me put it more precisely: the beautiful language of the Charter is worth nothing if it is not enforced. No more words are needed; it is the time for deeds. The United Nations must gain momentum, as there are continued attempts to ruin the rules-based international order and forcefully revise internationally recognized State borders. That dangerous slide towards a world with no civilized rules must be stopped. In that regard, there is a need to revitalize and strengthen the role of the General Assembly in the area of international peace and security.

With conflicts spreading, we must ensure the maximum flexibility and comprehensiveness when it comes to the agenda of the General Assembly, which is the only inclusive and the chief policymaking forum. That is why Ukraine introduced to the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly the item entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine". Member States should be provided with every possibility for in-depth considerations of all urgent situations that require the attention of the international community. As outlined by the President of the General Assembly, we have to facilitate quick and effective responses to emergency situations by the General Assembly. As one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, Ukraine stands ready to contribute to that.

As Member States, we conferred on the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. What should we do if a veto-holding member of the Security Council uses that right to veto in order to help itself escape from responsibility, rather than to help international peace and stability? It is time to say that the abuse of the right to veto is a constraint that often prevents our Organization from acting. We believe that progress on the reform of the Security Council will be an important contribution to the ongoing broader change at the United Nations. We support launching text-based talks within intergovernmental negotiations and are ready to engage constructively in that process.

We also expect that the ongoing reform of the peace and security pillar, which was envisaged by the Secretary-General with the support of the General Assembly, will contribute to the speed and ability of the Organization to react to the emerging threats to international peace and security. Ukraine fully shares the approach of the Secretary-General to the peacekeeping activity of the Organization under his Action for Peacekeeping concept. It is a timely opportunity for Member States and the United Nations leadership to consider measures leading to effective and real changes to United Nations peacekeeping. That is the same peacekeeping that Ukraine has been asking the United Nations to deploy to its territory since April 2015, when I addressed my request, with the support of the Parliament of Ukraine, to the President of the Security Council, the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General.

After the failure of the United Nations in preventing aggression against Ukraine, we still hoped that the Organization would help to settle the conflict by deploying a United Nations-mandated multinational peacekeeping force to the occupied Donbas region. We hoped for a mission with a strong mandate and broad responsibilities to help bring peace back to Ukrainian

soil, rather than freeze the conflict or cement the presence of the aggressor and its proxies in Donbas. We firmly count on further progress on that important issue. After all — and perfectly in line with the theme for this general debate, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people" — it is through Security Council-mandated peacekeeping operations that the United Nations can save countless lives and prevent further suffering.

We remain as determined as ever to continue to defend every inch of our territory against aggression. At the same time, we will continue to explore all available means to end the conflict peacefully and restore the territorial integrity of my country. Let me stress that Ukraine has always put first legal and diplomatic means of conflict resolution. We have prioritized multilateralism by turning to support from the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, as well as other international organizations, forums and mechanisms. We will continue along that path. Moscow will feel the strength of the rule of international law.

We have initiated several legal cases against the Russian side in international courts. We have already achieved important results in some of those cases. In particular, at the beginning of 2017, the International Court of Justice ordered Russia to lift the ban on the activities of the Mejlis — the representative body of Crimean Tatars in occupied Crimea. However, Russia continues to ignore that ruling, demonstrating its disregard not only for its international obligations but also for the Court.

Another important element of our case before the International Court of Justice is the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, in the year 2014, and the role of the Russian Federation in that tragedy. It is important that Australia and the Netherlands recently joined Ukraine in its efforts to bring Russia to account. The international community has repeatedly called on Russia to acknowledge its responsibility and change its destructive behaviour in Ukraine and elsewhere. We know that following the legal pathway is a lengthy process, but we are confident that it will allow us to achieve justice in the end.

It has been almost four years since Russia's attempted annexation and illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol. Under Russian occupation, Crimea has become a military stronghold, threatening the security and stability of the entire Black Sea region. We believe that the increasing militarization of Crimea deserves the General Assembly's close attention and prompt reaction. Russia's aggressive policies and arrogance in using lethal weapons multiply that threat. In that regard, Ukraine is counting on the active support of the General Assembly to implement the relevant resolutions during this session.

Since the first day of the illegal occupation of Crimea, Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians have faced repression and discrimination. There are many cases of murder, torture, harassment and arrest on fabricated charges. The list of hostages and victims owing to the Russian occupation regime in Crimea is growing longer by the day. Being of Ukrainian or Crimean identity seems to be a criminal offence in today's reality on the occupied peninsula.

A Crimean farmer, Volodymyr Balukh, was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison for raising a Ukrainian flag over his private residence. Crimean film director Oleg Sentsov remains behind bars in a remote penal colony in northern Russia, serving a 20-year prison term on fabricated charges. Both Oleg and Volodymyr are hanging in the balance between life and death as they remain on hunger strike. I highly appreciate the extraordinary manifestation of support and unity throughout the world in seeking the freedom of those brave people. Unfortunately, the Kremlin remains blind and deaf to those appeals from the international community and from many of Russia's intellectuals. I call on States Members of the United Nations to strengthen their efforts in demanding respect for human rights in the temporarily occupied Crimea by adopting the relevant General Assembly draft resolutions.

There are also dozens of Ukrainians being held by the occupiers in the Donbas region since the start of the Russian aggression in 2014. Ukrainian soldier Serhii Glondar has never seen his youngest daughter, as he has been held captive for three-and-a-half years. All Ukrainian proposals to exchange Russian citizens convicted of crimes against our sovereignty and territorial integrity for the Ukrainian citizens being held as political prisoners by the Kremlin remain unanswered.

That is just another side of Russia's recklessness — first sending and inciting its own citizens into this war and then simply abandoning them afterwards. That is the thing about today's Russia:

it absolutely does not care. It does not care about suffering. It does not care about truth. It does not care about the law. It thinks that its military might and status at the United Nations gives it that right. It is up to us to prove it wrong. It is up to us to make it care. Otherwise, what is the point of us being here? What would be the difference between the era before the United Nations and that with the United Nations?

In a broader context, Ukraine has always considered the protection of human rights as one of the cornerstones of United Nations activities. Sustainable peace and security cannot be achieved in isolation from human rights. We therefore support the efforts to bring back human rights issues to the Security Council and promote close cooperation among all the relevant United Nations bodies in that area.

My country is delivering on its commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Ukraine's economy grew in the second quarter of 2018 at an annual rate of 3.8 per cent. That marks the tenth consecutive quarter of growth, which is clearly a sustainable trend. The increase in gross domestic product (GDP) was helped by macroeconomic stabilization, an improved investment climate and a clean-up of the banking sector. Ukraine is demonstrating the best dynamics of growth among the emerging markets. Despite heavy security and defence expenses, totalling more than 6 per cent of its GDP, Ukraine is undergoing fundamental transformations on social, economic and political tracks.

We have consistently implemented progressive reforms, ranging in areas from the judiciary, education, health care and public administration to carrying out decentralization and fighting corruption. During the period 2019-2021, Ukraine will take on an important responsibility as a member of the Economic and Social Council. Based on its extensive recent experience, my country looks forward to using its membership to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council in following up and reviewing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with particular regard to conflict and post-conflict settings.

Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Ukraine particularly welcomes the United Nations initiatives aimed at reducing global hunger. Today, with more than 850 million people starving around the world, my country cannot stand idle and is ready to offer its help to the world in addressing the issue of food security. Ukraine knows the cost of that tragedy like no one else. In November, we will mark the eighty-fifth anniversary of one of the deadliest crimes of the twentieth century — that of the Holodomor, which saw mass starvation in Ukraine, artificially created by the Stalinist regime. It took the lives of several million Ukrainians. In that regard, I would like to renew my appeal to the Assembly to mark one of the greatest tragedies in human history by adopting a dedicated declaration.

Our Organization is only as strong as we want and allow it to be. Therefore, our full support and strong political will are required to ensure that the United Nations remains relevant in today's uncertain and turbulent times, and relevant, as is rightly stated in the theme of this general debate, to all people. It is our mission and shared responsibility to empower the United Nations to do what is expected of the Organization and to do it through our global leadership based on the shared values of freedom, the rule of law and tolerance.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Hernández Alvarado (*spoke in Spanish*): In delivering my statement to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, I would like to express my gratitude for the support of the United Nations to the national political dialogue under way in Honduras, undertaken at the initiative of several opposition leaders as well as my Government. Various

political forces and civil society organizations are taking part in the national dialogue, which remains open to anyone wishing to participate. One of the main goals of the dialogue is to propose electoral reforms with a view to building a new model. Only yesterday, by 110 out of 128 votes, the National Congress of Honduras appointed a committee for modernizing and updating the national identification system from which the voter registry is established. As well, the idea is to set up a new, modern and transparent technical system for authentic identification, all with a view to development.

As we meet at this great world forum and express our most sincere desire to work together as a team in order to build peace and find solutions, I also cannot avoid expressing my frustration at the lack of will and courage to make possible many of the ideas voiced here, despite the enormous size and amount of resources managed by the United Nations. Since the creation of the United Nations, it has been well established that respect for the sovereignty and self-determination of every State must be a priority for world peace. The principle of sovereign equality is crucial for the stability of the world. If we want to live in a harmonious system, we must comply with the pillars of the Organization, as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations.

We see international forces and actors constantly looking out for their own interests and interfering in our internal affairs, among other things, thereby affecting our democracy, which is a fundamental element for the development of nations that we are willing to defend. I say this today and I will say it tomorrow and always: it is necessary to protect the rule of law in our homeland. We live in new times with new realities and new challenges. The world demands great transformations and profound reforms. It is up to our current generation of leaders to live up to the demands of our peoples. That is an unavoidable responsibility.

I should now like to speak about the reality in my country, Honduras. We have been one of the countries most impacted by extreme weather events over the past 20 years, ranking first in the Germanwatch Global Climate Risk Index. Despite being one of the world's most vulnerable countries, Honduran society as a whole has been working to combat the effects of climate change. Excessive bureaucracy has prevented access to financing from the vaunted green funds; were we to have access, it would allow us to undertake action and contribute to reforestation, conservation and mitigation. I am convinced that it is the obligation of the United Nations and of each and every one of us to review and resolve as soon as possible the way those funds are used, rather than keeping them locked up in the vaults of the banks of the world. Every minute that those funds remain in bank vaults, the banking system gets richer and causes suffering to humankind.

Migration is a human right. Human beings have been on the move and migrating for centuries, thereby contributing to the social and economic development of the countries that welcomed them as they sought better opportunities. Honduras and the Central American region are no exception. Unfortunately, in recent times the entire world has witnessed the cruelty with which migrants, including my compatriots, have been treated. We have all seen the subhuman conditions in which they are held in detention centres, which trample on the dignity inherent to the human person. That undignified treatment is in addition to the daily abuse that thousands of migrants receive along the route of terror from South America through Central America to the United States, where they are victims of all kinds of violations by criminal networks, whether they be called coyotes, human traffickers, drug traffickers, maras or gangs.

I reaffirm that the principle of the dignity of the human person is a fundamental part of the Charter of the United Nations. We must act against the circumstances in which the most sacred institution of humankind, the family, is trampled upon and destroyed. With much pain, to date we continue to await the reunification of 120 separated children, who are being deprived of a right so basic and, at the same time, so fundamental for their development as is the family unit. The members of the Assembly can never forget the commitment to universal and effective respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, in which the overriding interests of children must prevail. That is where we need diligence from senior United Nations officials and every Government of the world.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Economic integration in Central America has been a major dream that we have longed for since 1951. Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador took the initiative today to take a step towards fulfilling that goal by creating the first customs union in the Americas. Our region enjoys a privileged location, with maritime borders on both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, thereby acting as a link connecting the rest of the world

to the Americas. Our objective is the establishment of a Central American common market, which entails the creation of a free trade zone and a common external tariff that establish the foundation for setting up a Central American customs union. That is one of those instances where the United Nations must become more aggressively involved.

We are working on integrating into that system the other countries of Central America, thereby enhancing a zone that holds great potential and enormous resources to be developed. Once fully established in Central America, that effort will make us the seventh-largest economy in Latin America. This model represents an opportunity to promote an American customs union that ensures the economic integration of the entire continent. Today, from this rostrum, I invite delegations, on the basis of paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, and with the support of the Organization of American States, to turn the region into an area of peace, prosperity and free trade, like the one Morazán and Bolívar imagined.

A customs union seeks to facilitate trade, but trade in which justice and fairness prevail. Today, the item at the top of the agenda of the United Nations is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which in essence constitute a frontal attack on poverty. In the context of the commitments it has undertaken under the SDGs, my Government has already approved the establishment of a national commission for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Still, the SDGs have sadly been interpreted as setting forth double standards, as millions of coffee producers — mainly the smallest ones, who are today receiving a price below their costs, which undoubtedly leads them in to extreme poverty — have witnessed. That is the case with approximately 90,000 coffee-producing families in my country, Honduras — and when I speak of my country, Honduras, in terms of coffee production, I am not talking about just any country, because we are the fifth-largest coffee producer in the world, the third-largest in America and the largest in Central America.

I would like to ask members of delegations a question. How many of them have a cup of coffee in the morning or during the day? We know that there is a very high possibility that, without knowing it, they have participated in an enormous injustice. Since we are all promoters of the Sustainable Development Goals, we must not turn a deaf ear to the fact that generates extreme poverty. A cup of coffee in New York City can cost $5, or 500 cents. Do members of delegations know how much the small coffee producers in my country receive after working hard under the sun and rain, harvesting every single grain of coffee by hand? I want to tell them — these producers do not get even two cents for every cup of coffee, and it costs $5, or 500 cents, yielding barely two cents for the producer. Is this or is this not an injustice?

I know that those who applaud recognize that it is an injustice. That cannot be. We cannot close our eyes, stop listening or cease allowing something to stir in our conscience and wake us up. That is why we are here.

We have been talking about the Sustainable Development Goals for a long time. However, I must ask, does it make sense to ignore the crisis that millions of small coffee producers are living through? In my country, there are only approximately 90,000, but in the Americas all together there are more than 14 million producers and in the world 25 million producer families, and millions more indirectly dependent on coffee production. We must act now — today.

While the United Nations is taking action on this issue — I say this because I am convinced that it is going to take action on the issue — I call on all the Presidents of the coffee-producing countries and the coffee producers of the world to organize themselves, because it is clear that no one is in fact looking out for the interests of the world's poor small coffee producers.

The first time I had the honour of addressing the General Assembly, I said that the greatest tragedy that Honduras has suffered in the history of the Republic has been the wave of violence resulting from drug trafficking (see A/69/PV.7). Our country is a transit zone for drugs produced in the southern part of the continent and consumed in the north. In addition to the scourge of drug trafficking, gangs, youth gangs and criminal groups have in the past literally supplanted States themselves in several regions, countries and circumstances. In my country, there are armed non-State groups that, when affirmatively confronted by good Hondurans who desire to live in peace, and are the object of the Government's efforts to restore peace and security, go so far as to threaten electoral processes, democracy and the rule of law. It is my firm conviction that in Honduras these non-State actors are violating fundamental rights — the human rights — of thousands of their compatriots. More alarming is the

fact that I have repeatedly made this denunciation in other United Nations bodies and in the Organization of American States, and until today we have not received any answers.

That is why I wanted to clearly draw the Assembly's attention to the issue. This situation should trigger alarms for States and specifically for the United Nations in the defence of the rule of law and representative democracy. I emphasize that it is a question of such fundamental rights as the right to life, freedom and the enjoyment of participatory democracy. Therefore, I take this opportunity to ask that delegations draft a resolution that recognizes that gangs, youth gangs and other criminal groups should be considered non-State entities that violate human rights and threaten the stability of States.

At a high cost and at great risk, we in Honduras decided to face this monstrous multiheaded challenge, and like very few countries in the region we have made progress, increasingly entrenching a climate of greater security and peace each day. But I can acknowledge that not enough has been done yet. That is why there can be no State Member of the United Nations that considers itself a supporter of democracy, pacifist or full of respect for life and does not heed our call, which is also the call of other peoples who have suffered under the same circumstances.

We must honour that generation that had the vision to create the General Assembly and ensure respect for the sovereignty of nations and the self-determination of peoples. I represent a country that, like every country, has problems and faces great challenges. I represent a country that is small in the size of its territory but great in dignity. I emphatically wish to say that I could not forgive myself coming to the General Assembly and not making an appeal to the conscience of world leaders to adopt a transcendent attitude, demanding that we pass from words to concrete actions that change the lives of the peoples of the world for the better.

I call for the protection of our democracies and human rights from attacks by armed non-State actors, gangs, youth gangs and criminal groups. I call for respect for the principle of the best interests of the child and the family as the holiest institution of humankind. I call for leading by example when it comes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, protecting the world's small coffee producers so that they receive what they deserve through a truly fair trade, since this fair trade implies not only obligations for producers but also that their rights are respected, which is what access to a fair profit would be.

In Honduras, we are ready to move from words and promises on paper to action. In Honduras, we are ready to act through actions that bring results.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commanderin-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kenyatta: Let me take this very early opportunity to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I have no doubt that the experience she draws from her distinguished career in the service of the Republic of Ecuador will be invaluable to her as she executes her new responsibility. I also note with appreciation that her strategic priorities for the seventy-third session, namely, strengthening multilateralism, catalysing the well-being of all persons and working to bring about a sustainable planet, as well as building a stronger, more efficient multilateral system, converge with Kenya's aspirations. It is therefore my pleasure to reaffirm my Government's complete commitment to our shared vision and to supporting the President during her tenure.

The seventy-third session of the General Assembly is the second session to be held during the tenure of Secretary-General Guterres, who has already spoken publicly about the financial situation of the United Nations and has even spelled out reforms that need to be executed to ensure optimal utilization of our finances. I applaud the Secretary-General for his efforts and courage to cut costs and for his commitment to ensuring that the Organization's resources are better managed. Indeed, I am convinced that part of those objectives will be achieved with the adoption of the proposals made in the context of the adoption of the global service delivery model. In that regard, it is my hope that Kenya will have the privilege to host one of the proposed three service centres. I also applaud the commitment of the United Nations staff, who are engaged daily in tackling a myriad of challenges that are greater than any one country or region can resolve on its own.

Kenya strongly supports the General Assembly's embrace of better alignment in the mandates of urbanization, human settlement and environmental governance. Its approach will enable the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to fully deliver on their role as global focal points for human settlements and environmental matters for the entire United Nations system.

Even as we speak of important reforms at the United Nations, we must also recognize that the need for reforms is much broader and of greater significance than previously acknowledged. In almost every part of the world, a growing lack of trust is opening a dangerous gap between citizens and their governing institutions. That situation is partly the result of the impact of a number of significant factors, key among which is the growing demand by all our citizenry for accountability, occasioned by the attendant awareness of the gap between available resources and the provision of services to populations. Such demands are also fuelled by a growing awareness of the scourge of corruption and wastage of public resources and their negative effects on the lives and hopes of people.

Due to the benefits of accessible information, never before in human history have so many people known how public trust is undermined by acts of commission or omission by a few individuals or networks, both in the private and public sectors. Weak systems of governance are manipulated and exploited for the gain of predatory interests at the expense of the common person. Free media and social media are rife with news of outright fraud, cynical conflicts of interest and financial arrangements that privatize gains during prosperous times and socialize losses during economic catastrophe.

In addition to individual corruption, major corporations misrepresent their earnings to deny Governments revenue needed for investment in the public good. The extraction of mineral and other resources continues to be subject to corrupt dealings that not only deny communities and countries any benefit but almost routinely lead to violence and instability. Such dealings have over several decades been clothed with the garments of legality, institutionalizing the exploitation by cartels and oligopolies that are pillaging Africa and other underdeveloped regions of their natural wealth. That is the source of the popular theorizing on Africa's resource curse.

It has become clearer to citizens all over the world that what is enabling the illegal and illicit conduct of corrupt individuals and companies is a globalized financial and legal system. Its impact is worldwide but it is probably the leading cause of most of the suffering on the African continent.

There is increasing evidence that Africa is a net exporter of much-needed capital to the world through illicit outflows. Conservative estimates indicate that between 1980 and 2009 illicit money outflows from Africa ranged from $1.2 trillion to $1.4 trillion, roughly equal to Africa's current gross domestic product and surpassing by far the money it received from outside over the same period. Every illicit dollar that leaves Africa goes somewhere — most often to where the rest of the money from tax evaders and criminals is hidden. Africans suffer as a result, but the irony is that what is done to Africa is eventually done to the rest of the world.

The present system of transferring and laundering illicit capital is enabling corrupt networks all over the world to illegally acquire in one country, while being welcomed with open arms as investors in another. The same system is used by drug cartels and even terrorist networks. Collectively, drug addiction, violent extremism, international crime and terrorist actions result in misery and hurt to millions of victims all over the world.

The most tragic manifestation of the destructive impact of the misery as a result of the crimes mentioned heretofore is the loss of trust in governing institutions

at the national, regional and global levels. As people observe the impunity, they increasingly feel that the economic systems are rigged against their hopes. Therefore, the trust deficit grows.

Frequently, institutions of Government have become desirable vehicles to capture ethnic or racial interests articulated by populists and extremists who thrive in chronic instability and drive it forward with their incitement. When networks and cartels in Government capture the State for their own selfish gain and represent themselves as champions of an ethnic or religious group, the result is all too often civil strife and civil war. In such an atmosphere, the result of a political competition can begin to seem like an existential threat to groups and their members.

The fragility of our world is also manifest in instability and conflicts, as in the case of both Somalia and South Sudan. In Somalia, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a unique regional effort that has deeply degraded one of Al-Qaida's most ambitious affiliates. Kenya has been part of that journey from the start. It was in Nairobi where a transitional federal State was negotiated into existence, with the material and moral support of the Kenyan people. We have never wavered. Kenyans have lost lives and property in pursuit of peace and stability in Somalia, and we appreciate our regional and international colleagues and partners. In Somalia, a historic chapter on Africa's will to peace and security is being written. We appreciate the partners standing with the region.

But the job is not yet done. We must ensure military success over Al-Shabaab if other political and economic solutions are to take firm root. So far, the troop-contributing countries continue to bear a disproportionate burden. We have consistently sought the kind of international support that is commensurate with the threat scenario, including in the form of enablers and force multipliers. These have not been forthcoming. What the international community is doing with regard to Somalia is not good enough. We understand that these are difficult times economically, but global terrorism must be faced boldly. If we have learned any real lessons in the past 20 years, we should appreciate that AMISOM needs support, and it is up to all of us to make that happen.

In building peace there are no silver bullets. The process of bringing stability and peace to South Sudan requires commitment. It requires us to walk closely with the South Sudanese parties, particularly now after the signing of the revitalized peace agreement. Kenya is proud of having walked with the Sudan and South Sudan in their pursuit of peace and stability. We have always known and firmly believe that the constancy of our efforts would yield the fruit of a prosperous and free South Sudan.

Today, we call on all Member States to join us in that endeavour for peace and stability in South Sudan. I appeal to all Members, development partners, international agencies and friends of South Sudan to redouble their efforts and support this cause to end the suffering of the children, women and men of South Sudan.

Allow me to turn to the global sphere, which has also not been spared the challenges of today. Multilateralism is under severe strain, as evidenced by our global trading and economic management system. Rarely has the system of trade and security that was established following the Second World War, under the auspices of the United Nations, been under greater strain. The populism and extremism unleashed at the national level has brought forward powerful constituencies that want a dismantling of the global order.

I believe that the most urgent political task in the world today is to close the trust gap between people and governing institutions. Governments are not owed trust by citizens; that trust must be won and protected. It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of global stability and the continuity of many States turn on this issue.

There are bold solutions that we must embrace in order to succeed. We have to fight impunity, seriously and without fear or favour. In Kenya, we are undertaking an aggressive campaign against fraud and abuse of public trust. We have reached out to our partners in Switzerland and the United Kingdom to take action against transfers of illegal proceeds of corruption to their banking and financial systems. We will pursue more such bilateral arrangements. They must be accompanied by determined reforms that are subject to clear timelines and standards, and which combat systemic corruption in the multilateral system, money-laundering and the offshoring of illicit outflows. The single overarching aim must be to make it exceedingly difficult to transfer and launder illegally acquired wealth in any part of the world.

Indeed, all United Nations bodies should be given the task of detecting corruption in their different focus areas and promoting the skills and systems to combat it, in the understanding that honest, transparent and responsive Government is fundamental to the achievement of their aims. We must create a stronger understanding of the presence and impact of such deals in their different focus areas.

The gap in trust that we are talking about at the national level can also be found at the global level and is aimed squarely at the leadership and processes of the multilateral system, as reflected in the Security Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and other parts of the system. In the years following the Second World War, the present status quo was functional and understandable. That is no longer the case 75 years later. The global governance system must also undergo reform if it is to be relevant and effective.

The clearest sign that change is real will be in reforms to the membership of the Security Council. Kenya joins the demand for two permanent seats for Africa — with the rights and prerogatives of current members, including the right of veto, as well as additional non-permanent seats. As we all know, Africa is underrepresented in the non-permanent category of the Security Council, and we are not represented at all in the permanent category. That historical injustice is a clear indication of the skewed system that has perpetuated an exclusive model of governance that fuels the trust gap between nations. The governance, leadership and employment in United Nations funds, programmes and agencies must also become more noticeably inclusive of the global South, especially Africa.

Kenya is a proud host to the only United Nations global headquarters in the global South, namely, the headquarters of both UNEP and UN-Habitat, whose mandates and effectiveness we are strongly committed to supporting. We strongly believe that the multilateralism that would headquarter major organizations in Africa and the global South is what the world needs. Global decision-making needs more of Africa if the world is to respond wisely to the demographic and economic shifts that are under way.

Without Governments and the international system addressing the broadening deficits in fairness and inclusiveness, corruption, populism, radicalization, civil strife and political instability will continue to destabilize and destroy. Today's problems, risks and threats are complex and call for more — not less — cooperation, more —not less — observance of the rule of law, more — not less — negotiation. We need a rules-based multilateral system. We are at a decisive moment, and Kenya will play its part to be a champion for change. I welcome all delegations in a campaign for our collective benefit.

In conclusion, the sea is increasingly being seen as a sustainable source of food, jobs and prosperity for the growing populations of the world. It is with that in mind that Kenya and Canada will co-host the first-ever global conference on the sustainable blue economy from 26 to 28 November this year, in Nairobi. I therefore take this opportunity to welcome all delegations to this conference and its deliberations on how we can access and harness financing, technology and skills as well as innovations and capacity-building to allow us to turn the blue economy into a driver of millions of jobs, a source of food and sustainable shared prosperity. We will be greatly honoured to host you, Mr. President, in Nairobi.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commanderin-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maamau: I begin by sharing peace and blessings among us all and conveying warm Pacific greetings from the Government and the people of Kiribati. In the name of Almighty God, *Kam na bane ni Mauri* — May all be blessed.

I join other leaders in congratulating the President of the General Assembly, and the Government of Ecuador, on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I wish her every success as she discharges her functions by making the United Nations family relevant to all Members. By the same token, I would also like to acknowledge the outgoing President, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, and the Slovak Republic for the very engaging and outcome-oriented leadership of the seventy-second session. I also thank the Secretary-General for his excellent leadership, in particular with regard to the current reform to make the United Nations fit for purpose and more adaptable for the present and future.

We commend the President of the General Assembly for the theme that she has chosen for the seventy-third session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". That is a strong call on and reminder to all leaders and the United Nations machinery that the effectiveness of our efforts is measured not by how much we have achieved, but by how much we have changed the lives of those whom we serve for the better. Clearly, it was the primary intent of the founders that this should be the United Nations as they envisioned it. It is about servant leadership, whereby leadership is not only about serving but, more important, about protecting the lives of the powerless — those without a voice, those taken advantage of by the more powerful in society, and those who cannot help themselves politically.

We are reminded time and again that those people's lives are precious in the sight of God. In her captivating and simple words, Mother Theresa reflected powerfully on the life of a servant leader when she said, "A life not lived for others is not a life". As leaders, it is our shared responsibility to ensure that we see to that. The theme also provides a timely call for a renewal of friendship, solidarity, cooperation and partnership between and among the peoples and nations of the world, thereby allowing greater commitment on all our part to make a difference for the well-being of all.

Kiribati has long recognized the prime importance of peaceful living, characterized by our own traditional, humble way of living in harmony with one another and our environment. Those are sustained through regular community meetings in traditional local meeting houses, called *maneaba*, to discuss important issues concerning the village and to address issues under the wise and experienced guidance of our elders. Decisions are made to promote mutual understanding, respect and cooperation among members of the entire society. *Maneaba* means "to embrace all" — a holistic system in which leadership and shared responsibility are undertaken for the benefit of the whole society. Accordingly, the *maneaba* system maintains its fundamentality as central and relevant to the people.

In the Pacific context, other relevant instruments have been adopted to address social, economic and political risks and security. Some have worked, while others have not, but that does not stop us from maintaining our resolve, through our own Pacific way, to undertake meaningful dialogue in which agreement through consensus serves as a prevalent norm. Moreover, the Pacific accounts for 20 per cent of the world's oceans in terms of our exclusive economic zone, and therefore the completion of maritime boundaries is very critical to providing certainty about the ownership of our ocean space in the face of climate change.

A united world free from the threats of wars and violence, rooted in our greed to dominate others, is the kind of world that we want for all of us and for our children's generation. Our ultimate aim is to ensure that everyone can lead a happy, prosperous and secure future. The adoption of the historic United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982 has also enabled us to own and sustainably manage a huge area of ocean, from which we can further improve our well-being and enjoy returns from our fisheries resources. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has also assured us that the radiation-related illnesses suffered by our people during and after the 1960s nuclear testing on Christmas Island and other parts of the world will not recur in the future. There are many other examples of how international resolutions and instruments have contributed immensely to our national efforts to improve our island way of life. We have no doubt that other peoples and nations see the United Nations in the same light.

As an organization, the United Nations is bound to be constantly pulled and pushed between two opposing

but interconnected interests: the personal interests of those leading and driving it, on the one hand, and the interests of the people for whom it exists, on the other. It is therefore critical that the Assembly have the ability to ensure that a balance is maintained so that the United Nations does not end up benefiting only those running and facilitating its operations.

In that regard, we look forward to the outcome of the reform of the United Nations development system, on which our views have been adequately expressed through statements made on our behalf by the groupings of the Pacific small island developing States, the Alliance of Small Island States, the least developed countries and the Group of 77 and China. In particular, we look forward to the positioning of a new Resident Coordinator to serve the northern and central Pacific territories and countries. We also look forward to the outcome of other reforms and reviews pertaining to the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, the eligibility and graduation criteria in relation to least developed countries and, finally, the financing status of the United Nations.

We also fully appreciate the United Nations particular focus on the plight of people in developing countries, especially those facing special difficulties. In that connection, we note with gratitude the Committee for Development Policy's recognition of Kiribati's extreme vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and the need for special support. That gratitude extends to the President and members of the Economic and Social Council for agreeing to our request to have our graduation case considered in three years' time.

We are concerned to learn from the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/1) about the financial difficulties facing the United Nations to the extent that it is affecting not only its services but also the well-being of its staff. We understand that the United Nations has been relying more on voluntary contributions and private-sector funding than assessed membership contributions, which is a significant risk. It is therefore high time for us to reassess the validity of certain activities of the United Nations that have outlived their time and the need to realign strategies that were quite applicable and effective during the post-war years, when States were the key drivers of United Nations services. Those are no longer effective with United Nations services becoming the exclusive domain of huge multinational corporations that often put profit-making over moral and ethical considerations.

One example is the hundreds of millions of dollars spent annually on peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. Those funds could have been better spent on eliminating the root causes of conflicts, armed terrorism and humanitarian crises by investing United Nations resources in the establishment of good governance, with good-quality, free education and health services. In that way, the collective resources of the world can be spent to treat the causes and not merely the symptoms.

Kiribati presented, for the first time, its voluntary national review report to the United Nations in July. As I stressed in the video introduction of our review, Kiribati has now embarked on a bold and bright narrative that carries our people's voice and determination, boosted by various resilience-building programmes allowing us to forge ahead with a 20-year road map and transforming Kiribati into a wealthy, healthy and peaceful nation by 2036. That is our Kiribati 20-year vision, known as KV20, which aspires to move the nation and people beyond orthodoxy through the unleashing of the enormous potentials vested in our fisheries and tourism. I must, however, emphasize that underpinning the drive and implementation of that ambitious aspiration is making Kiribati a corruption-free society, as part of our strong commitment to championing anti-corruption in the Pacific.

We will follow through on that with the regional leaders meeting on anti-corruption, to be held on our shores in 2019. Corruption undeniably poses a human risk to all forms of development, and it is the weak and the marginalized who suffer and bear the highest cost of such unethical practices. Kiribati has also, for the first time ever, launched a climate change policy. That focuses on building and strengthening the resilience of our islands and people in adapting to the impacts of climate change. The policy highlights priority areas in water management, sanitation, coastal protection and renewable energy, and will serve as the country's national compass for the delivery of all climate-change programmes in Kiribati. We acknowledge our many partners that have worked and continue to work with Kiribati. We welcome those who are also ready to work and journey together with us to build and strengthen the resilience of our people and islands.

To that end, I am pleased to reaffirm that we continue to maintain 11 per cent of our exclusive economic zone in the Phoenix Islands, comprising over 400,000 square kilometres of ocean as a marine protected area. That well-known area — the Phoenix Islands Protected

Area — is considered to be a powerful and effective tool for the rejuvenation of tuna fisheries and other marine organisms and a source of resilient coral species, known as super corals, many of which have a lifespan of over 100 years. From our understanding of the early findings of science, the Phoenix Islands Protected Area is home to one of the richest, most diverse and most resilient marine ecosystems on the planet. It has the potential to become the most powerful source of marine life enrichment and provide solutions to many of the problems facing humankind, which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is trying to address.

By closing off the area to commercial fishing, we have sacrificed a substantial amount of annual income from fishing licences, which is estimated at approximately 10 per cent of our annual fishing revenue, averaging almost $10 million annually. While that is forgone revenue, it is part of Kiribati's strong commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, I am proud to announce that Kiribati has also declared its entire exclusive economic zone as a shark sanctuary, which has been incorporated into our national laws. In that regard, we commend current efforts to create new legally binding instruments on the use of marine biological diversity in marine areas outside our exclusive economic zone, migration and the environment, all of which are very important for small islands like Kiribati, including other nations and peoples.

The United Nations theme to be delivered in the next 12 months is about all the people living on this planet. That theme will be irrelevant if the United Nations continues to ignore the 20 million people who live and contribute to our shared home and to exclude them from the process. We are one family, and we therefore call for an inclusive approach enabling Taiwan to participate in international processes and to contribute to addressing areas of concern to this United Nations organ, including the implementation of the SDGs.

For too long, we have been confined to our human desire to dominate, while lacking consideration, compassion and respect for others as they seek to pursue sustainable development in their own right and space, but let us remind ourselves and the United Nations family of the equally important responsibility of recognizing a space for a United Nations prayer day. The objective in that regard is to seek divine guidance for our work agenda. Quite often, we tend to overlook the importance of divine guidance as a powerful tool that can really unite our hearts in a shared aspiration to make the United Nations a truly global institution for all people and to build the trust, respect and love that we all need to make a genuine difference. May God's grace and compassion continue to bless our hearts as we strive to strengthen the Organization.

In conclusion, I wish to share Kiribati's traditional blessings of *Te mauri, te raoi ao te tabomoa*, which means "health, peace and prosperity to us all".

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mnangagwa: It is my honour and pleasure to deliver my maiden statement in the General Assembly. Allow me to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to preside over the Assembly at its seventy-third session. As only the fourth woman in the history of the United Nations to hold that important position, her election is indeed most appropriate in terms of addressing gender equality within the Organization. The theme that she has chosen, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", resonates well with the mantra of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely, to leave no one behind. The theme is a timely reminder for us to keep

the momentum going three years after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Also at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a promise to end all forms of poverty. That shared vision and common destiny require us all to do our part in order to meet the ambitious targets and create a better world. For us in the developing world, the eradication of poverty is at the top of our agenda priorities. Development must equally be placed at the centre of the work of the United Nations. as it plays an important role in preventing hunger, deprivation, food insecurity, disease and, ultimately, conflict. The inclusion of the interests and views of women, young people, children and vulnerable members of our societies should be integral and essential components in all our programmes.

I am pleased to report that Zimbabwe has made substantial progress in the implementation of some of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular with regard to ensuring food security. Through our people-centred policies and planned programmes, complemented by private-sector financing and investments, farmers receive inputs, equipment and technical support. In a bid to improve nutrition and broaden income opportunities, we have also extended support to grow the livestock, fisheries and wildlife sectors. We are confident that those multipronged programmes will accelerate Zimbabwe's re-entry into the global economy and associated value chains. That is one example of innovation, creativity and home-grown solutions in addressing key development and economic challenges despite the continued illegal sanctions imposed on our country. We call for their immediate and unconditional removal. Meanwhile, we look forward to the first overall review of the implementation of the SDGs, to be held under the auspices of the General Assembly in 2019.

Peace, security, stability, democracy and good governance are essential ingredients of sustainable development. In view of the fact that elections are an integral element of democracy, my country held its much-anticipated harmonized general elections on 30 July. Following my deliberate and conscious decision to open up democratic space and my emphatic call for peace, unity and tolerance of divergent views among our people, political contestations, election campaigning, voting and counting processes were conducted freely, peacefully and transparently. In the spirit of transparency and openness, a broader spectrum of international observers and global media houses were accredited to observe our elections. The exceptionally peaceful pre- and post-electoral environments represented the maturing and entrenchment of democracy in Zimbabwe. We are grateful to the United Nations and other Member States for sending election observer missions and for the technical assistance received by our election management body. The recommendations will be taken into account as we deepen our democratic and electoral processes.

We will continue to entrench constitutionalism, democratic traditions, norms, peace, unity and harmony, for it is indeed under such conditions that sustainable development, inclusive economic growth and prosperity can occur. The isolated and unfortunate incident of post-election violence that occurred on 1 August, is regrettable and most unacceptable. A commission of inquiry comprised of eminent persons of national, regional and international repute has begun its work in earnest. Its ultimate report and recommendations will help us bring closure to the matter and assist in the improvement of our institutional governance.

Now that the elections are behind us, my country is focusing on economic development as we seek to jumpstart the modernization and industrialization of our country. The land reform programme is irreversibly behind us. Emboldened by the dreams, hopes and aspirations of our people, and in tandem with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063, we have outlined our vision to become a middle-income economy with a per capita income of approximately $3,500. That will bring on board increased investment, decent jobs, broad-based empowerment and a society free from poverty and corruption by 2030. Zimbabwe is open for business, and we are presently undertaking a raft of economic and political reforms to ensure an environment that facilitates inclusive and sustained economic growth. We have put in place institutions and instruments that maximize land utilization and increase agricultural productivity. Equally, strategies are in place in the various sectors of our economy to enable my country to enter the global value chain. The development and modernization of our roads, railways, airports, energy and information and communications technology infrastructure are being accelerated. in line with our regional and continental quest for enhanced connectivity and integrated infrastructure.

Zimbabwe looks forward to playing a positive and constructive role as a free, democratic, transparent, prosperous and responsible member of the family of nations. We are committed to strengthening dialogue, cooperation and partnerships, underpinned by mutual respect, common values and shared principles. The prevention of conflict must be a front-line strategy. My country remains committed to strengthening multilateralism and the peaceful resolution of differences. In that regard, we should address the root causes of conflict, which include poverty, inequality, deprivation and disputes over land and resources, as well as struggles for self-determination. Peacemaking and peacekeeping must be complemented by peacebuilding efforts to prevent the recurrence of and relapse into conflict. Zimbabwe continues to make its modest contributions through the deployment of its personnel to various United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions.

The United Nations and its organs are in need of being democratized. We join the call for Africa to be represented in the permanent category and to have increased representation in the non-permanent category. That position is indeed justified in view of the need to correct the historical injustice that has left the African continent on the periphery of all major global decision-making processes. We emphatically call for the review and reform of the Bretton Woods and other international financial institutions. Trade is an engine for development if conducted fairly and in accordance with agreed rules. We therefore call for negotiations, under the auspices of the World Trade Organization, that would foster inclusive and shared economic growth and further advance the global development agenda.

In the spirit of leaving no one behind, our efforts to promote a global partnership for peace and development will never be complete unless we address the plight of people living under occupation. It is most saddening that some of us continue to turn a blind eye to the suffering of the people of Palestine. It is high time that the United Nations fulfil its obligations and duties under the Charter by implementing all its relevant resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2334 (2016).

On the African continent, it is equally disheartening that the people of Western Sahara have yet to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. We call on the Security Council to insist on the holding of an independent referendum for the Sahrawi people without delay, in compliance with the relevant decisions of the African Union and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Furthermore, it is imperative and urgent for the Council to work tirelessly to strengthen its cooperation with the African Union Peace and Security Council in the search for a just and fair solution to the issue of Western Sahara.

Climate change poses a threat to all of humankind, and its impact respects no borders. We therefore call for collective action and responsibility concerning the matter. As a developing country, Zimbabwe seeks support in the areas of adaptation, mitigation, technology, finance and capacity-building, as envisaged in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Zimbabwe's commitment to the principles of the Charter and pledge to continue to work with other nations in promoting and strengthening multilateralism for the good of humankind. Now more than ever, the United Nations must exert its authority and work harder for peace in a world where might is increasingly regarded as right. Let us work together in harmony to ensure that the United Nations and all its organs truly serve the collective interests of all Member States. As global leaders, we have a shared and onerous obligation to transform our societies and create a more peaceful and inclusive world for present and future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duda (*spoke in Polish; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, on her election to that honourable function. I wish to assure her of Poland's full support for the measures she will take. At the same time, I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his active leadership of the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

This year, Poles celebrate the centenary of regaining their independence. In 1918, after 123 years of bondage, Poland returned to the map of Europe and the world. The restoration of an independent, free and sovereign State became a reality mainly due to three factors: the desire of the Polish nation to have its own State, the heroic sacrifice of soldiers in battle and the determination of courageous leaders who convinced politicians across the world that, without a restored Poland, Europe would not be just and safe. Both then and today, the will of the nations and of the political leaders remains crucial. Both then and today, Europe cannot be just and safe without a sovereign Poland.

Each September, the Heads of State and Government meet here at United Nations Headquarters in New York to engage in an in-depth reflection on the most crucial issues affecting our globe. It is therefore we who have a particular responsibility. It is we who are rightly expected to be courageous, active, able to rise above divisions and determined in our search for solutions to the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

Our world is full of threats. We are witnessing a very dynamic development of the international situation. There are reasons to be hopeful, such as a potential change in the situation on the Korean peninsula and the ongoing de-escalation of tensions there, but there are also problems that persist and remain unresolved. In order to resolve them, we undoubtedly need the cooperation of as many countries as possible today. Two conditions must be met if we are to be effective.

First, we must all comply with international law, which was the main theme of the Polish presidency of the Security Council in May. I had the privilege of convening a high-level open debate at that time (see S/PV.8262), which concluded that only cooperation among countries within the rules-based global order can provide an opportunity to resolve frozen conflicts and prevent the emergence of new ones, that the rules-based global order requires strong institutions to enforce international law, and that no violation of the law can be justified or distorted through twisted language definitions.

Today the map of the world is full of flashpoints. As part of the rules-based global order that we are promoting, I would like to draw attention to one fundamental principle that will be our priority throughout the second year of Poland's membership of the Security Council. I am referring to the sovereign equality of States, as provided for in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. If we want to be advocates of multilateralism — and the United Nations is, after all, its source — we must bear that principle in mind. In other words, not everyone who claims to be a proponent of multilateralism thinks of it in terms of the equality of States. One can say that there is a negative multilateralism, which boils down to the concert of Powers, a division into spheres of influence and the conviction that the fate of others can be decided without their participation. Europe and Poland were often victims of that brand of multilateralism, starting in the eighteenth century, continuing throughout the nineteenth century, and lasting to the times of the Cold War.

Multilateralism and the rules-based global order are not just for the chosen ones. The same principles must apply to all in equal measure. Everyone has equal rights and proportional obligations. That is how I define the positive multilateralism that Poland stands for — the multilateralism of equal States and free nations, not the multilateralism of usurpation and hierarchy. We are committed to relations in which every State enjoys equal rights. That, however, does not imply a naive perception of a world devoid of differences among States. What it means is that States that have an advantage in terms of potential and power should not deprive others of their equal right to independence and sovereignty. Only when that equality is ensured can we fully use the potential of States for the common good and according to the rule of fair play. That applies both to political and economic relations, since only if the principle of the equality of States is respected can we talk about shared interests and enter into real alliances.

However, the concept of positive multilateralism to which Poland subscribes goes one step further. It claims that, wherever possible, weaker countries should be given additional opportunities to have an impact in order to make the equal rights of States more realistic. Such opportunities can encompass additional

voting power or additional territorial representation in decision-making bodies. As President of the Republic of Poland, I am particularly attached to two areas of application of that principle: first, the awaited reform of the Security Council, which we support and want to participate in, and which should include among its leading themes expanding the field of equal rights and competences of all Council members; and secondly, a reform of the European Union, which emerged from the concept of positive multilateralism that today is being repeatedly violated, by returning it to its origins. Next year, Poland will organize a series of initiatives centred around the idea of sovereign equality. The aim of that effort is to win over as many supporters of our vision as possible. I invite one and all to participate in those debates.

Secondly, it is important that multilateralism serve a certain system of values instead of being just one element of a political technology and a game of interests. Such a system of values is reflected in the Charter of the United Nations. Negative multilateralism, which contravenes those values, may only exacerbate global problems and aggravate the situation. On the other hand, the voluntary cooperation of States, equal in rights, can bring lasting peace to Europe and the world. Every time an attempt to create a concert of Powers is born, global stability is undermined. Whoever promotes negative multilateralism contributes to the disintegration of the global order. Multilateralism is meant to be a commitment to respecting values, especially fundamental values such as respect for human dignity and life. It is about values that go beyond the political order and are not politically defined, for they are the foundation of the global order.

International relations serve not only States but all humankind. Therefore, a State's sovereignty should be fundamentally linked to its responsibility for ensuring respect for common norms for the good of all. Violations of those norms must have consequences. Whenever leaders violate fundamental human rights, engage in torture, persecute their political opponents or use weapons of mass destruction, the international community, including the Security Council, should respond swiftly, decisively and boldly.

As a nation with unique experience of a peaceful democratic transformation and a struggle for fundamental freedoms, Poland attaches particular importance to the protection and promotion of human rights, as exemplified by my country's bid for membership of the Human Rights Council for the 2020-2022 term. Our membership of that body, which is unique in the global human rights protection system, would serve as a natural complement to our current membership of the Security Council, in accordance with the fundamental United Nations triad of peace and security, human rights and development.

The Charter of the United Nations endows the Organization, especially the Security Council, with a special responsibility for addressing matters pertaining to international peace and security. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we deem that task to be of crucial importance. Poland actively supports all actions and initiatives aimed at preventing the use and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as well as bringing those who use such weapons to justice.

Poland intends to return to active participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions. We have submitted a formal application to the Secretariat in that regard and look forward to its positive evaluation. We are convinced that our many years of experience in that field will contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Poland is involved in the process of stabilizing the Korean peninsula and building lasting security there — not only now, in its capacity as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, but also as a member for dozens of years of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea. I am convinced that our long-term experience within the Commission could serve to establish permanent foundations for peace and stability on the peninsula.

Given the extensive experience it accumulated during the period of political transformation, Poland stands ready to become actively engaged in the international peace rebuilding and consolidation programmes in the Middle East, wherever it is necessary, post-conflict, to restore stability and provide development opportunities.

At the same time, Poland regards it as its duty to draw the attention of the international community to the sources of threats to world peace resulting from frozen conflicts, occupation and the shifting of borders by force, which is happening in Eastern Europe. The international community must not allow a return to business as usual, and the actions of the aggressors should be met with an appropriate response.

In December, Poland will have the honour to host the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24) in the city of Katowice. The primary goal of that meeting is to finalize work on the provisions implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. A complete and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement is inextricably linked with the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, global climate action should incorporate the economic, social and environmental dimensions, and be conducive to stopping global warming and eradicating the most serious problems of the modern world.

The implementation package to be adopted in Katowice provides an essential basis for action to be taken by State entities and non-governmental organizations, including international financial institutions, the private sector, local authorities and civil society organizations. Only provisions applicable in the long-term and accepted by all actors are able to guarantee transparency, legal security and the sustainability of rules, which are indispensable to the implementation of the adopted obligations and for strengthening global ambitions.

COP 24 will be launched at a summit of leaders, to be held on 3 and 4 December, and offers an excellent opportunity to express our common and responsible political will. It will also send a clear message to the world that our efforts are aimed at securing a safe future for all. Once again, I wish to invite all Member States to attend the Katowice summit and ensure a high turnout for the event.

The centenary of Poland's recovery of its independence leads us to reflect on the fate of Europe and the world and on my country's difficult road to freedom and independence. It also provides a reason to look to the future and an inspiration to sensibly shape our common international reality based on historical experiences, values and aspirations. I encourage all Member States to collaborate even more closely on initiatives aimed at achieving the objectives that guide the Organization. Only decisions taken jointly by political leaders can effectively address the challenges faced by a globalized world.

Poland subscribes to the view that our common future requires a strong and effective international community that will better accommodate the needs of humankind. That, however, will depend mainly on us, since the United Nations is not an abstract entity but our common achievement. It is up to us how effective we will be in using it for the sake of building peace and ensuring justice and sustainable development — in other words, building a better world, worthy of the twenty-first century, for us and, first and foremost, for future generations, our children and our grandchildren.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rebelo de Sousa (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I convey very special congratulations to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to preside over the General Assembly. I congratulate her on her personality and career, on the priorities she has defined, on the progress she represents in gender equality at the United Nations and on the informal interactive dialogue, which is a sign of the increased transparency of the General Assembly.

Portugal welcomes and reaffirms its full support for the priorities the Secretary-General has set and the actions he has pursued during his lucid, dynamic and exceptional mandate. Multilateralism, based on international law and the Charter of the United Nations, the reform of the Organization, conflict prevention, peacekeeping and the maintenance of peace, concern for migration and refugees, combating terrorism and international crime, the oceans and maritime security, climate change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, gender equality and support for our

young people are all aimed at the permanent upholding of human rights.

The key is always strengthened multilateralism. That is why we do not understand — and in fact deplore — the use of unilateralism as a way to disinvest in international organizations. It represents political short-sightedness that runs the risk of making us repeat the mistakes that were made almost a century ago. United Nations reform requires the commitment of all Member States. Maintaining the status quo is a way of gutting multilateralism and, in the absence of prevention, multiplying risks and conflicts, resulting in underdevelopment and the violation of human rights. And if we fail to reform the Security Council through a broad-based consensus we ignore the geopolitics of the twenty-first century, which at the very least requires the inclusion of representatives of the continent of Africa, Brazil and India.

Portugal is a participant in conflict-prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and institutional capacity-building operations in nine United Nations missions, six of which are in Africa. I would particularly like to highlight our presence in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

With respect to migration and refugees, we need to understand the causes of the growth in mass movements of people, and we need dialogue among societies of origin, transit and destination. Portugal unreservedly supports the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, the global compact on refugees and the promotion of the right to education in emergency situations. We have welcomed and will continue to welcome migrants, refugees and other displaced persons. Under our former President Jorge Sampaio, my country launched the Global Platform for Syrian Students and calls for the broadest possible participation in the Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies.

The fight against terrorism has led to the creation of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the first United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States and a sixth United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review (resolution 72/284). The guarantee of justice for victims of serious international crimes is now one of the tasks of the International Criminal Court, which began to consider the crime of aggression in 2017, following a decision in which Portugal played an active role. With the support of more Member States, the Rome Statute, which created the Court, is expected to move towards universal adoption.

With regard to multilateralism and international law in the area of oceans and maritime security, Portugal is actively involved in preparations for the second United Nations Ocean Conference, in 2020, and stands ready to assume all responsibilities related to that. Maritime security is needed in places such as the coast of Somalia or the Gulf of Guinea, where Portugal is part of the European Union Naval Force Operation Atalanta within the framework of the European Union, and also in the Yaoundé process, together with the African Union and the countries of the region. And we are going further, creating a centre in the Azores as a platform for various international organizations working to protect the oceans. Global governance of the oceans, supported by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is a just cause. For us, those are structural issues that we do not change to suit short-term trends and actors. We regard a healthy environment as a fundamental right; we support carbon neutrality by 2050 and, with Lebanon, we are jointly chairing the ad hoc open-ended working group with a view to drafting a global pact for the environment.

There are basically two different views of the world. One is short-term. It is unilateral or minilateral, protectionist and focused on populist domestic discourse. It minimizes the importance of multilateralism in anything to do with sustainable development, is prone to climate change denial, opposes global compacts on migration and refugees and is interested in conflict prevention and peacekeeping on the rare occasions when and where they suit it, and they are more likely to suit it when the emphasis is on economic rather than political power. The opposing view, which we share, is multilateral, open, favourable to the quest for global governance, committed to sustainable development and respectful of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and human rights as values and principles, not as means or conveniences. We are confident that, in the medium to long term, that view will prevail, as it has in the European Union, which has given Europe its longest period of peace in living memory and high levels of welfare and social protection.

As we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Law Commission, it is an appropriate time to call for consensus on the adoption of the biennial resolution on the moratorium on the death penalty, which is to be submitted to the General Assembly.

Our view of the global situation and the role of the United Nations, which, as I said, is in complete agreement with the view of the Secretary-General, is based on our positions on those so-called regional questions that are global in scope. Let me now comment on some that are of particular relevance to Portugal.

We salute the strengthening of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) — currently chaired by Cabo Verde, to be followed by Angola — whose contributions to stability and development I want to highlight. The CPLP enjoys an excellent cooperative relationship with the United Nations and pursues the goal of seeing the Portuguese language, one of the most widely spoken in the world, adopted as an official language of the United Nations.

We also commend the steps that have been taken in Guinea-Bissau in preparation for elections in November. We would like to highlight the increasing importance of the African Union and its key uniting role for peace and sustainable development, its growing partnership with the United Nations and the historic step of the signing of the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship between Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is our hope that the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be held in a safe, free and fair manner and that the results be respected by all.

The important developments on the Korean peninsula are opening up the prospects for its complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, demonstrating the commitment and courage of the parties involved, the contributions of regional partners of the United Nations and, above all, the role of diplomacy in bringing about world peace and security.

We note the signing of the maritime-boundary treaty between Australia and Timor-Leste under the auspices of the Secretary-General, confirming the effectiveness of the peaceful settlement of disputes through conciliation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Unfortunately, some parts of the Middle East and the Maghreb continue to show signs of long-term political, social and economic instability. In Libya, the international community must come together to assist with the humanitarian and security situation and in establishing a robust State. Yemen remains the scene of one of the worst humanitarian crises today, where the most vulnerable — women and children — are especially badly affected. Only through a negotiated political solution mediated by the United Nations and with respect for international humanitarian law can we reverse that increasingly tragic situation.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Equally tragic is the humanitarian crisis in Syria, with one of the largest refugee flows ever seen in the region or beyond. In that case, too, only a substantive, inclusive political solution mediated by the United Nations can ensure effective and broad-based international support for reconstruction. The fact is that stability and peace in the Middle East will be possible only through the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Common sense demands the resumption of a credible negotiation process that addresses all the final-status issues, including the question of Jerusalem, and can lead to a viable two-State solution based on the coexistence of Israel and Palestine in peace and security.

As the Secretary-General suggested yesterday, true patriotism and cosmopolitanism are complementary. Portugal believes that multilateral action, political dialogue and diplomatic wisdom are the only possible path to harmonious coexistence among nations and peoples, and that very short-term perspectives, however appealing they may seem, are just a flash in the pan that will not last and will not solve the world's true problems.

As Nelson Mandela said,

(*spoke in English*)

> "A fundamental concern for others in our individual and community lives would go a long way in making the world the better place we so passionately dreamt of."

That is the Organization's noble mission; it is also the reason for Portugal's deep commitment to the United Nations. The United Nations represents neither a luxury nor a short-sighted trend, but rather a long-lasting universal need.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President

of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sánchez Cerén (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, our Latin American sister, on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I also want to pay tribute to Kofi Annan, whose commendable work at the helm of the United Nations left us a great legacy in the defence of peace and a fairer international economic order. And I would like to express the condolences of El Salvador on the recent death of the President of the Republic of Viet Nam, Tran Dai Quang. We also want to express our solidarity with the Government and the people of the United States for the effects of Hurricane Florence and those in the Philippines and China who have been affected by the devastating climate events in their countries.

This year brings us together under the theme "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". It is our responsibility to reach out to all, without discrimination of any kind, with intelligent and effective public policies and tools that meet the needs and aspirations of our people. That has been a priority for El Salvador during my Administration. The social protection programmes we have promoted were decisive in lifting more than 400,000 people out of poverty between 2015 and 2017. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has become a crucial reference point for the implementation of our national policies. We were among the earliest countries to adapt the 2030 Agenda to its purpose of mitigating the consequences of decades of serious social inequality and repairing the State's historical lack of interest in the needs and demands of the people.

El Salvador joins the call of Secretary-General António Guterres regarding the urgent need to close the gaps in the financing of the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end, we have allocated nearly 50 per cent of the national budget to social development, an unprecedented investment for my country. But even with all of our efforts, our national financing will not be sufficient. The international community must also honour its commitments in this regard. Those contributions must respond to a comprehensive, long-term perspective in order to ensure inclusive economic growth and end poverty for the millions of people who are suffering the worst consequences of climate change and the unfair distribution of wealth. In the case of middle-income countries such as El Salvador, the key lies in supporting and supplementing our financing capacities, particularly from public sources.

Our country is dealing with multiple vulnerabilities. We recently suffered one of the longest droughts in our history, a reality that climate change has inflicted on us. That obliges us to invest additional resources in order to guarantee families food security and keep food prices stable. If we are to tackle that situation, it is crucial to ensure that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change continues to be implemented and the current Green Climate Fund crisis is resolved. As a country that hardly pollutes globally but suffers the effects of climate change caused by others, El Salvador urgently needs access to financing for climate-change mitigation and adaptation action that will improve its population's security and resilience. Our adoption in Bonn of a global initiative at the twenty-third Conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has enabled us to move forward with the large-scale restoration of our ecosystems and to become an example of a small country with limited financial resources capable of protecting its environment. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Erik Solheim, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, for supporting our proposal to declare 2021-2030 a United Nations decade of ecosystem restoration. We invite the General Assembly to consider this initiative aimed at coordinating our efforts to counter the accelerated loss of forests and

the degradation of soils and ecosystems, which have a negative effect on the well-being of 3.2 billion people.

As one of the Heads of State who in 2015 adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at a memorable and historic General Assembly meeting (see A/70/PV.4), today I can affirm that we have made great progress in combating poverty and reducing inequalities. My Government has given priority to social protection programmes through development strategies that enabled us to reduce poverty by 10 per cent between 2009 and 2017. Through our critical national literacy programme we have declared 100 municipalities free of illiteracy, including San Salvador, which became the third Central American capital to record that educational achievement. That effort continues with our firm commitment to achieving a literate country, a noble task in which we have the generous support of more than 50,000 young volunteers, advocates and other sectors of society. The support of the people and Government of our sister Republic of Cuba has been essential to that success. Its Yo Sí Puedo campaign is a model for the eradication of illiteracy to Latin America and the world.

As part of our defence of women's rights, we have developed a strategy for the prevention of the killing of women and sexual violence that involves all Government institutions in empowering women and ensuring that they can live free of violence. The strategy, which has been strengthened by the Spotlight Initiative with support from the European Union and the United Nations, seeks to eradicate social and institutional practices that are damaging to women's dignity. We have also strengthened the internationally recognized Ciudad Mujer programme, which has been implemented in several countries and has provided care to more than 1.8 million women through health services, defence of women's rights, skills training and financing for economic projects. On the health front, the implementation of our national strategic plan for the reduction of maternal mortality stands out, as well as our national health surveillance plan. Both have helped El Salvador reduce its maternal mortality rate, which in 2017 dropped to 31 per 100,000 live births.

In our pursuit of those urgent efforts we have the spiritual guidance, the message of peace and the promotion of social justice of blessed Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero, who on 14 October will be canonized by Pope Francis, a historic event that our people are celebrating with profound joy and hope.

A topic of special relevance at the global and regional levels is migration. My country looks forward to welcoming the prompt adoption of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees as clear examples of the leading role of the United Nations in the search for a new global consensus. We must approach migration from a human rights perspective in order to realize its benefits and address the challenges it represents. This year many migrant families, mainly from the northern-triangle countries of Central America, have been dealing with the difficult and painful situation of separation, which has caused irreparable psychological and emotional damage to the children and adolescents involved. We believe that the best interests of children and their families should be respected, regardless of their immigration status. I reiterate El Salvador's request to the United States authorities to speed up the reunification process for minors entering their country at its southern border, whether or not they were accompanied by their families.

In recent years, El Salvador has worked to create better living conditions through the promotion of investment, the development of human capital, security, the prevention of violence and the fight against criminal trafficking networks and drug trafficking, among other initiatives, actions that have enabled us to reduce irregular migratory flows of Salvadorans to the United States by 60 per cent. El Salvador rejects the criminalization of migrants, since experience has shown that their industriousness contributes to the economic, social and cultural development of destination societies. Our compatriots protected by the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programmes, who for years have contributed to progress in the United States, are a clear example of that. As a Government we are working to make sure that the competent United States authorities guarantee the legal instruments required to provide the population in the United States under TPS and DACA with greater migratory stability and permanent residence.

As a founding State of the United Nations and a country respectful of international law, El Salvador recognizes the importance of multilateralism in addressing such global challenges as peace, a more just economic order, climate change, migration and sustainable development. In that context, we stress the need for constructive dialogue, concerted action

and cooperation and the strengthening of integration mechanisms and regional alliances. In the face of crises and conflicts affecting the world, it is important to give priority to dialogue and political solutions. That was our approach on 30 June in Santo Domingo, at the Meeting of Presidents of the Central American Integration System countries, where we stated our position on the situation in our sister republic of Nicaragua. We reiterate the call for dialogue and consensus as the necessary paths for the construction and maintenance of peace, with respect for the Constitution and the rule of law.

In order for the international community to make steady progress towards development, we must put an end to unilateral measures such as the unjust and anachronistic economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States. That coercive measure must end because it causes incalculable harm to the Cuban people. The same goes for the economic siege against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which affects its international payments and its ability to obtain goods and services, as well as its people's living conditions. We stand for respect for the self-determination and sovereignty of the Venezuelan people and condemn any external interference or threats of military intervention.

I thank the United Nations system and Secretary-General António Guterres for the valuable support they provide to our development programmes for the well-being and tranquillity of Salvadoran families. We are also grateful for their assistance in and support for a national dialogue process towards the development of new national agreements, a continuation of the peace accords that we signed in January 1992. I reaffirm El Salvador's commitment to helping make the work of the United Nations relevant to all people and to global leadership, with a view to advancing humankind's aspiration to achieve peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. My Government continues to work tirelessly to that end. We are confident that with the commitments we have undertaken to fulfil the 2030 Agenda, we are moving forward with the building of a united, prosperous and peaceful El Salvador.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Waqa: It is an honour to be here for the opening of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. On behalf of the Republic of Nauru, I would like to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her recent assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and to thank Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his exceptional work as our outgoing President.

The theme chosen for this year's debate — "Making the United Nations relevant to all people" — is deeply resonant for this representative of a small island developing State (SIDS). It is so self-evident that it borders on cliché to state that some communities have not benefited from the current global economic system. Yet it bears repeating again and again lest those places be forgotten entirely. The Republic of Nauru is one such place, and it is to the United Nations that we look for assistance. However, to be responsive to the needs of my country and many others like it, we must address a systemic bias within the United Nations and start thinking small.

The population of Nauru is a little over 10,000. Let me try to capture some of the challenges we encounter in accessing the support available from the United Nations by sharing a story from my days as the country's Director of Education. Eager to participate in an education-data tracking programme offered by UNESCO, I logged onto its website and began to input the required information for registering my country. The first question was straightforward: number of primary schools. I typed in the number 6 — not 600,

not 6,000, but "6" — and the response read "error". I moved on to the second question: number of teachers. I typed in 59 — "error" again. I was not able to register for that promising education programme. But I did learn an important lesson that day. It is not easy to gain access to support from the United Nations system when one is representing a small country.

Our unique challenges as SIDS are widely recognized. Some are inherent in the geophysical nature of the islands we inhabit, such as a small land mass, limited natural resources, geographic isolation and vulnerability to natural disasters. No less important are the challenges imposed on us by the global economic system, which was not designed with our countries in mind. Our small populations and production base do not yield the economies of scale sought by private investors. Volatility in commodity markets has an outsize impact on our fiscal planning. The negative externalities of consumption-based economic growth have destroyed the health of our oceans and the safety of our climate.

Meanwhile, corporate consolidation and a liberalized global financial system translate into fewer and fewer opportunities for small enterprises to develop domestically. That leaves us with extremely underdeveloped economies, overly reliant on one or two key sectors that are often highly vulnerable to changing global market trends or shifts in the political priorities of our development partners. SIDS typically score extremely high on economic vulnerability indices for that reason, and Nauru is no different. While today we may be considered a middle-income country under certain metrics, our economic situation could change dramatically for the worse overnight owing to forces that are completely out of our hands.

Those observations are not new. We have been grappling with such challenges for decades. But in the face of climate change, developing effective strategies for dealing with them has become much more urgent. I think it is fair to say that the logic of the entire global economic system is driven by a relentless pursuit of larger and larger scale. In the name of efficiency, private enterprises expand operations in places with large pools of cheap labour or vast reserves of resources. They merge with competitors to increase market share. They seek out the greatest profit centres and abandon those that underperform. Talk to any newly minted graduate with a master's degree in business administration about a new business idea, and the first question he or she will ask is "Does it scale?" I dare say that that logic has permeated the United Nations system. Why design a programme to help a country of 10,000 people when one can theoretically help 10 million? Why wade through all the loan paperwork to replace a small diesel generator when the same number of documents can mobilize funding to transform a much larger energy system? If my country is too small to even warrant inclusion in a simple online database, where does that leave us?

For the smallest countries, the micro-States, conventional pathways to development are not available to us. We simply cannot offer the profit potential that private investors seek. We must therefore look to public institutions — to the United Nations — to create an environment in which the rest of us can grow and prosper. The Republic of Nauru cannot be treated as an "error". When viewed through the lens of conventional economics, our lack of scale is our problem. If we are to address the challenges of small islands, therefore, we have to abandon the conventional wisdom. We have to think about scale differently. Once we take that leap, our small size can become our greatest advantage.

Earlier this month, Nauru had the honour to host the forty-ninth Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting. The theme of the meeting — "Building a strong Pacific: our people, our islands, our will" — was chosen to highlight the uniqueness of our region and the imperative that we chart our own course to sustainable development. Traditional and new partners alike joined us at the Pacific region's first round table on Sustainable Development Goal 17 to announce new initiatives in the areas of energy, health care and protection of the oceans. The event was successful because our partners recognized the opportunities in our small islands. The countries that demonstrated no respect for the sovereignty of the small and vulnerable or for the leaders of the Pacific and the regional process were respectfully asked to yield the floor to those that did.

Small can be nimble. Small means that modest resources can have a transformative impact. When our sustainability metrics are aggregated with those of the rest of the world, we become nothing more than a rounding error. But when joined by partners that are prepared to understand our constraints, we can become living proof that a better, more sustainable way of life is possible. With regard to renewable energy, for example, a few small islands have made enormous progress in the past few years and are looking to achieve 100 per cent renewable-energy systems within

a decade, a tremendous achievement. That is a much more difficult undertaking in large countries, which must serve population centres spread across a much wider geographical area, navigate a minefield of politically powerful incumbents and bear much higher financial costs.

We can see some of our Pacific island neighbours racing to the front, with the rest of us clamouring to follow their lead. We are ready to seize the opportunity presented by cheap solar energy and free ourselves from the expensive burden of fossil fuels. Capacity and resource constraints are the only things holding us back. My Government's own analysis puts the cost of moving Nauru to 100 per cent renewable energy at $63 million. For a modest investment, the world would have visible evidence that the future we want — a clean, zero-carbon society — is well within our grasp. That transformation would also dramatically improve our fiscal outlook, providing a much stronger foundation for progress in other areas of sustainable development.

Just because the task is smaller does not mean it is easy. But there are simple steps to be taken that would dramatically improve our situation. Financial and capacity-building resources need to be made more accessible for our capacity-constrained countries. Streamlined and harmonized application and reporting procedures would significantly alleviate one of our largest hurdles. In addition, new funding approaches, such as direct-access modalities and direct budgetary support, seem to yield much better results in small countries. Adequate financing must be available for basic infrastructure, not just for the development fads of the moment. The Pacific region's partnership with the Government of Italy has been a resounding success because it has been structured with those issues in mind. The model works because it regards the Pacific islands as the primary drivers of their own development. When working with the Government of Italy we know that the tremendous respect that they have shown us has nothing to do with the size of our countries.

Building a more inclusive United Nations also requires addressing the most urgent global challenges, which include the security implications of climate change. In that regard, I would like to reiterate the call I made in July in the Security Council for the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on climate and security (see S/PV.8307). We are already seeing dangerous effects on our countries and communities, with the most vulnerable among us bearing the greatest burden. A special representative, supported by a well-resourced staff, is needed to help us start managing climate risks more effectively. That is a critical gap in the United Nations system that must be filled immediately.

Making the United Nations relevant to all people must include the people of Taiwan. The treatment of the people of Taiwan should be equal to that of other nations. The United Nations should resolve the serious issue of the exclusion of Taiwan's 23 million people from the United Nations system. The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations clearly states that the Organization's mission is

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Governments of Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, Japan, India, the Russian Federation, Italy, Israel and Cuba, as well as the European Union for their assistance to Nauru. We value their friendship very much and look forward to our continued collaboration.

We applaud the President for choosing to promote a theme of inclusion in this debate. In the pursuit of scale, it is easy to forget that many of the smallest and most vulnerable often fall through the cracks. My Government stands ready to work with her during the seventy-third session of the General Assembly to build a United Nations that brings peace and equitable and sustainable societies to all people. God bless the Republic of Nauru. God bless the United Nations. God bless us all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on her recent election to her important post.

The men, women and children of every continent in the world throughout our shared home, planet Earth, hope that our deliberations will bring concrete improvements to their lives. The world sees its leaders meet once a year and continues to hope that we will collaborate in complying fully with our mandate to build a more just society for all. When the United Nations was created, after the Second World War, it established clear purposes that now serve as a measure of our triumphs, failures, threats and opportunities. We sought to maintain international peace, security and justice, prevent and eliminate threats and suppress acts of aggression. We sought to resolve our disagreements by peaceful means and to foster friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principles of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples.

The theme of the general debate this year — "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" — allows me to cite a practical provision of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which is that Member States

> "shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered".

I am referring here to the proceedings that Bolivia has brought before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, whose decision will be announced next week. The case deals with Chile's obligation to negotiate with Bolivia in an effective and timely manner on sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean. It tests the shared responsibility of two States to agree on just solutions within the framework of international law. The Court asserted its jurisdiction to hear and resolve that international disagreement in 2015, whose hemispheric interest was recognized by the Organization of American States because it involves two neighbours and undermines efforts to achieve the regional integration of peoples. Bolivia's goal is the good-faith achievement, together with Chile, of a durable, sustainable and mutually satisfactory solution to a 100-year conflict that has put two neighbouring countries at odds.

Its worst consequence is that Bolivia has been a landlocked country, with its people and the State deprived of access to the Pacific Ocean, a state of affairs that has severely affected our human and economic development and continues to do so. Bolivia's maritime suit is related to its understanding of diplomacy as working for the people, their life and their right to access to the sea and its vast resources, the largest setting for life on the planet and the shared heritage of humankind and its peoples. Human beings are supported by the sea. Life on Earth is not possible without water, and it is not possible to think about the lives of people without access to the sea. Not only is it a door to trade, markets and modern transactions, it is also a window on other peoples and on life itself.

We hope that the legal proceedings that have been brought before the International Court of Justice will be recognized and will help to bring the parties closer to the start of productive negotiations. We also hope that to the extent possible, with the support of the international community, it will help us to reach a genuine agreement that honestly outlines the causes and effects of the conflict that has driven us apart for more than a century. The agreement should also critically examine the inadequacy of the agreements and attempts to overcome Bolivia's landlocked status, while validating and illustrating the reciprocal advantages of timely and effective agreements in the context of the principles of regional and global integration and reconciling two peoples engaged in an absurd conflict, often for reasons that are alien to their values of brotherly coexistence.

The conflict between Bolivia and Chile over access to the Pacific Ocean is not the result of a recent or passing political or electoral issue. It goes back to the very origins of our territorial dispute at the end of the nineteenth century, when the interests of foreign corporations seeking to exploit the natural resources of the Atacama area, such as guano, potassium nitrate, silver and copper, launched a hostile, asymmetric and

expansionist campaign in the region. The landlocked status imposed on Bolivia could not be remedied through treaties that proved insufficient or through attempted agreements and failed commitments.

The Bolivian people's ongoing claim is more than a century old, both at the regional level and in multilateral organizations. Bolivia is certain that whatever the International Court of Justice decides, it will mark a new era in the relationship between Bolivia and Chile so that we can face the future with righteousness and a determination to explore mutually acceptable and lasting solutions. Our peoples and their leaders must unite their desire for peace and their political will in a single voice if they are to identify feasible, functional solutions that make them feel that they have won rather than lost. Practical solutions, forged by creative and effective diplomacy, have been found to even the oldest and most complex controversies in the world.

The Governments and the peoples of Bolivia and Chile must wait patiently for a legal decision that, beyond its formal aspects, can open the door to a new era of peace, justice and brotherhood. Such an opportunity deserves the attention of the States Members of the United Nations, since the decision of the Organization's main legal body to assume jurisdiction over, hear and adjudicate a dispute, and, in this case, to suggest parameters for a possible solution, will set a precedent for fairer societies that are willing to share the responsibility for resolving their differences. That would be a contrast to the past, when domination by winning wars was all that counted. That is the significance of our case in the context of the theme of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

We have frequently warned the Assembly about the many crises facing humankind and life as a whole on our planet. Unfortunately, every year we attend this event to confirm that, despite many praiseworthy efforts, a number of those crises have not only continued but worsened. I want to take this opportunity to talk about the three biggest threats we face. The first is climate change. Every year is warmer than the one before. Every year more severe weather events occur. Every year more people and other living creatures are irreversibly affected by hurricanes, floods, droughts and pollution. While we consider global efforts such as the Paris Agreement important, if we do not tackle the underlying structural causes of climate change, we will not be able to stop it, all the more so when the biggest polluter in the history of humankind, the United States, turns its back on science, multilateralism and thereby on humankind. Climate change is an inseparable consequence of capitalism, overproduction and patterns of consumption. The planet is exhausted and so is life along with it.

The second major threat is the arms race, the culture of war and the possibility of a nuclear disaster. Many leaders of countries, especially those that have the most weapons, come to this forum to talk about peace. Military spending is growing, with an increase of 1.1 per cent in 2017 over spending in 2016, and has now reached the extraordinary sum of $1.739 trillion, or 2.2 per cent of the global gross domestic product. The world cannot live at the expense of those who believe that they have the right to produce and use weapons capable of totally destroying life on our planet. In addition, the arms industry feeds off war, and as its weapons are proved to be effective at killing children, the value of their shares increases in the stock market. That criminal logic must end. That threat also comes at the hand of those who are willing to invade countries and change Governments in order to expropriate their peoples' natural resources. They install military bases with the aim of controlling the entire planet.

The third great threat is inequality. Every year our wealth is concentrated in fewer hands. In 2017, 82 per cent of the world's increase in wealth ended up in the hands of the richest 1 per cent of the population, while half of humankind saw no increase at all. According to data from Credit Suisse, 42 people are now worth the same as 3.7 billion others taken all together. Those figures are shameful, and we should all be ashamed, because they represent a model of wealth accumulation and poverty distribution rather than one of wealth distribution.

Bolivia condemns in the clearest and strongest terms the illegal, inhuman and criminal economic and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States. The United States has the obligation to make financial reparations for the damage done to the heroic Cuban people and should comply with the relevant General Assembly resolutions by immediately lifting the blockade. It should also restore Guantanamo to Cuban sovereignty and refrain from any interference or intervention in its internal affairs.

From our seat on the Security Council, we have closely followed the progress and difficulties in the implementation of the peace agreement signed between

the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. We are hopeful that the new Government of Colombia will promote the processes for the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants and will protect the lives of human rights defenders and community leaders, thereby once again affirming that Latin America and the Caribbean is a zone of peace.

Our brother country the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is suffering shameless aggression at the hands of the United States and its allies. Latin America firmly rejects any attempts to intervene militarily in Venezuela. Venezuelan issues must be solved by the Venezuelans, and the United States must abandon the illegal and unilateral measures that are one of the causes of Venezuela's economic problems.

We also want to take this opportunity to condemn the criminal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the United States Government's unilateral and illegal decision to declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel, which jeopardizes any possibility of reaching a just and lasting peace. We also reiterate our support for a two-State solution, with a free, independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We deeply regret the fact that the war in Syria has caused more than half a million deaths in the past eight years, a consequence of policies of regime change, interference in internal affairs and efforts to expropriate natural resources. Bolivia repudiates the violations of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity directly or indirectly perpetrated by different States, including the United States, and we hope that the efforts of the United Nations to reach a political agreement by and for the Syrians will soon bear fruit. We welcome the efforts of Russia, Iran, Turkey and Kazakhstan to prevent any more suffering by the Syrian people.

In conclusion, it is my duty to inform the Assembly about the situation in Bolivia. As is well known, we have liberated ourselves from the bonds of United States military bases, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the United States Agency for International Development, and from the demands of the International Monetary Fund as well as other types of taxation. Bolivia is now an example to the region and the world. We have one of the fastest-growing economies in the region. In the past decade we have reduced extreme poverty from 37 per cent to 17 per cent. We have increased life expectancy by eight years, lowered infant mortality by 56 per cent and reduced chronic child malnutrition by 50 per cent. Bolivia invests more money than any other country in the world in renewable energies in relation to gross domestic product. We are building a more just society. We also want to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that, as part of an initiative to fight corruption, our President and Vice President have renounced bank secrecy. We call on all Heads of State to pursue such a measure with a view to governing as transparently as possible.

Those achievements have been made possible thanks to the unity of the Bolivian people, the defence of our sovereignty, the recovery of our natural resources and strategic enterprises, the pluralistic economic model and the redistribution of wealth. We reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism. It is imperative that we work together to build a society with equal opportunities for all. We must take care of this planet, our only home. We must make this a world where justice is possible and peace a reality.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Remengesau: Let me begin by congratulating Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her recent assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, becoming only the fourth

woman to take that seat and the first to represent her region. Palau welcomes her to that prominent role. I have no doubt that, as our captain on our voyage towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, she will steer this canoe in a unique and effective way. Let me also express my gratitude to His Excellency Minister Miroslav Lajčák for his exceptional service during his recently completed term.

I would also like to pay my respects to a great leader and humanitarian, our former Secretary-General and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kofi Annan. A friend and ally to all, Mr. Annan was the living embodiment of our mission to create peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. This year we also celebrate the legacy of Nelson Mandela, which continues to inspire the poor and the oppressed to demand equal rights. In honour of the centenary of his birth, the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit (see A/73/PV.4 and 5) was a historic opportunity to reaffirm our faith in the principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Republic of Palau is committed to promoting peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies both at home and internationally. We see the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the most important framework for achieving that objective. The path that each country takes to achieve its goals will be unique, but we recognize that all are interlinked and reinforce one another. Palau's core priorities are health, oceans and climate change, through which the rest of our development objectives, through genuine and durable partnerships, will be realized.

Palau has declared 2018 as a Year of Good Health. At home we are implementing a number of actions to raise awareness and to cultivate healthier lifestyles so as to respond to the deadly problem of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Palau is one of the 10 countries with the highest rates of obesity in the world. I am sorry to say that, while in other parts of the world people are dying of hunger and poverty, in our corner of the Pacific we are dying from overeating and a poor diet. The rise in the incidence of diabetes, heart disease, cancer and other NCDs is attributed to unhealthy diets, insufficient physical activity, the excessive consumption of salt, sugar and fat and alcohol and tobacco use. NCDs are now the leading cause of death in Palau and, sadly, throughout the Pacific region. As many as 75 per cent of us will die prematurely from NCDs. The crisis has prompted a strategic shift in focus at Palau's Ministry of Health towards increasing preventive services in an effort to improve the health and livelihoods of our people. We are encouraging a return to traditional diets and increasing our local food production, as much of the problem stems from imports of unhealthy junk food. However, in the case of tuberculosis, I am very happy to report that the incidence of tuberculosis has been minimal and well under control for the past few years.

For my country, the ocean is our livelihood, our culture and our identity, which is why achieving SDG 14 is so critical for us. The ocean is also the foundation of our booming tourism industry, which will continue to be the largest provider of jobs in the country. We have launched a new campaign, Pristine Paradise Palau, which makes sustainability a top priority. I firmly believe that our environment is our economy and our economy is our environment. Preserving our magnificent coral reefs and abundant fisheries will ensure that tourism continues to grow, as well as protecting our food security for generations to come. For that reason, we have moved aggressively to implement our national marine sanctuary, a no-take zone that covers 80 per cent of our exclusive economic zone. It is Palau's contribution to the global effort to achieve SDG 14. The marine biodiversity endemic to Palau is priceless. We are therefore eager to work with the scientific community to identify more ways to build the resilience of our coral reef ecosystem.

We are proud of our domestic efforts but international action remains essential. Last year, the world gathered here in this great Hall and declared that the ocean was sick and needed our united global assistance to restore it to good health (see resolution 71/312). This year, in response to that call for help, Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway and I, together with representatives of the Governments of Australia, Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Namibia and Portugal and the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, launched the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. The Panel seeks solutions for building a transformative political agenda for ocean action and the development of a platform to deliver the management and tracking of commitments, initiatives and partnerships, including science-based monitoring of the ocean, featuring national and private-sector leadership.

Palau is also seeking a strong outcome to the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation

and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, which will be an important complement to our domestic actions. Further out on the horizon, my country will be proud to play host to the Our Ocean 2020 Conference. That same year, Portugal will host the United Nations Ocean Conference. We must identify our priorities and catalyse new coalitions so that the year 2020 will indeed come to be remembered as a year of action.

My Government also takes very seriously its contribution to the Paris Agreement, which is also integral to our plans for achieving SDG 13 and other relevant goals. Climate change is the greatest challenge of our generation. Only this month we once again saw the damage that record-breaking cyclones cause vulnerable countries, as Super Typhoon Mangkhut did the Philippines. Building the resilience of vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change must be an urgent global priority.

Palau has developed a climate change policy framework with the aim of undertaking effective adaptation measures to deal with the expected effects of climate change, strengthen our capacity to prepare and minimize disaster risks and mitigate climate change by working towards low-carbon emission through clean energy initiatives. Meanwhile, we continue to work with our global and regional partners to build capacity and mainstream climate change into our national planning and budgeting process. Small island developing States are indeed making great strides in transforming their energy systems. As part of our vision for building a pristine paradise, Palau has adopted ambitious international commitments to increase its supply of renewable energy by harnessing the power of the sun and transforming our energy sector to receive at least 45 per cent of our electricity from renewable sources by 2025. Smokestacks have no place in paradise. Let me say that again. Smokestacks have no place in paradise.

Our target represents an extremely ambitious undertaking but we are confident that, with the right partners, we can achieve our goal. We take very seriously our responsibility to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions as part of the global effort to limit the temperature rise to 1.5° Celsius. While Palau emits a minuscule fraction of the global aggregate, we believe that the example we set can inspire many others to act. Earlier this year, we took a big step forward by enacting a law modernizing our electricity sector to enable it to make a rapid transition to renewable energy, and we now have the enabling framework to trigger investments in transforming our economy so that it can harness the sun's power. We can now contemplate the possibility that, in the near future, people and consumers will pay less for electricity and the financial savings will be distributed to the areas where it is needed most, such as health and education. One day very soon, visitors to our islands will be treated not only to a beautiful environment but also to a bold example of a more sustainable way of life.

Of course, all of that work depends on the dedication of our partners and their commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 17. Our ambitious goals can only be attained with strong international partnerships that respect our national priorities and independence. Palau is fortunate to have many good friends and strong partners. We continue to strengthen our relationship with the United States of America through the Compact of Free Association, and we offer our gratitude for our unique relationship. We wish to give special thanks to the United States of America for the approval of the amended financial provisions of our Compact. The Government of Japan has also provided generous support through the years, and we are sincerely grateful. Its friendship, assistance, partnership and support continue to strengthen our economic and social undertakings.

We would also like to express special thanks to India for its recent efforts to expand and strengthen its partnership with my country. India has partnered with us to improve our youth initiatives and strengthen family projects, and this year I have declared 2018 as a Year of Good Health, for which India is now a significant partner in reforming our health sector. We look forward to working through the Indo-Pacific strategy for partnerships in maintaining the integrity of our maritime areas. Cooperation in surveillance and the efforts of international law against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing will address a major challenge to sustainable fisheries, as well as improve regional security. The Government of Australia remains a strong partner in our maritime surveillance and enforcement efforts. We also recognize its support to the development of our information and communications technology sector through the World Bank.

The Republic of China, Taiwan has long been an ally in our efforts to achieve our Sustainable Development Goals. That special friendship and partnership can be seen in our infrastructure investments, as well as

continued assistance in health and education. We urge the United Nations to seek a solution that will enable it to include Taiwan in all its processes, including the International Civil Aviation Organization and the World Health Organization. My Government firmly believes that Taiwan's inclusion in the United Nations system will greatly benefit the work of the United Nations and its 2030 Agenda and beyond. Palau is fortunate to have gained many newer partners and friends, and I would like to recognize the European Union, Italy, Indonesia, New Zealand, Russia, Thailand, Spain, Singapore, Korea, South Africa, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Viet Nam and many others.

We remain committed to the need to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again. There is an inextricable connection between testing and the elimination of nuclear weapons. The legacy of the more than 2,000 nuclear tests that have been conducted has touched people and communities in many regions, including the victims of nuclear testing in the Pacific. Nuclear tests have damaged the environment, human health, food security and economic development. Weapons of mass destruction have no place in this world, and we urge that efforts be made to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling of such weapons and ballistic missiles of all ranges by North Korea. The global community must adhere to the fulfilment and implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and should uphold the international rule of law.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General for initiating reforms of the United Nations, including the repositioning of the United Nations development system. Given the special status of our small island States with regard to their vulnerability, remoteness and size, the reform under way is timely and also highlights the need for a strengthened role for United Nations country teams and the resident coordinator system, along with the establishment of permanent offices for them in our region. We must ensure that the smallest countries are able to fully participate in the development of reform plans. Palau also reiterates its call, as a member of the Pacific small island developing States, for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on climate and security, which would address a significant gap in the United Nations system.

Building peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies is no longer an aspirational ideal. It is an absolute necessity for addressing the very grave economic, environmental and humanitarian challenges facing the world. Palau stands with the Assembly as we begin the seventy-third session and as we continue working on that critical voyage.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Palau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maduro Moros (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government and the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I would like to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, the first Latin American woman to assume that position.

We have been convened to work on and address at this session the important and crucial theme "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". Making the United Nations relevant to all is indeed a noble and lofty objective, which the United Nations system must pursue at the dawn of the twenty-first century, a century of great opportunities that we firmly believe will set the tone for the processes of human, political and popular liberation that will have a significant impact on the future of the Organization sooner rather than later.

The United Nations was born in 1945, in the heat of the end of the so-called Second World War. The way it was organized throughout the rest of the twentieth century was a reflection of the post-war conflicts and action of those years in a bipolar and — after the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s — a unipolar world. The correlation of forces and the functioning of the world have always directly influenced the United Nations and, in order for it to be relevant, in accordance with the objective of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, it must express the desires, the way of being, the culture, the political thought, the strength and the hopes of the majority of the peoples of the world.

That is why Venezuela has come here today — to speak its truth. I bring to the Assembly the truth of a fighting, heroic and revolutionary people. I speak on behalf of a homeland that, throughout its history, has refused to surrender to injustice or to the empires that yesterday were made up of slave owners and colonialists and that today are still made up of slave owners — neocolonialist slave owners. I speak on behalf of a historic people who rose up in a heroic resistance to support indigenous and native peoples who for centuries resisted domination by the colonial empires of the past. I speak on behalf of the country that has the honour to be the birthplace of the great liberator Simón Bolívar, the outstanding leader of the generation of liberators of the Americas, who 200 years ago achieved the heroic feat of founding a continent and a region and of realizing a dream — that of independent republics in this region of the world.

Venezuela is a historic place. It is both a birthplace and a school of republican values, a birthplace and school of rebellion, a birthplace and a school for dignity and for the values such as equality on which our homeland has stubbornly insisted in its search for its independence and sovereignty throughout the centuries. That is the voice I bring to this Hall, which has been the backdrop for one of the most infamous and shameful assaults we have seen in recent years.

Our country has been harassed and assaulted. Yesterday, in this very Hall, the President of the United States of America once again attacked the noble people of Venezuela (see A/73/PV.6), invoking the doctrine that established the United States empire 200 years ago and determined its interventionist role, its purported role as judge, plaintiff and policeman of the world — the Monroe Doctrine. In this very Hall, the President of the most powerful imperial nation in the world, the United States of America, articulated the doctrine of James Monroe, who, in his day, said that America was for the people of the United States and that the rest of the Americas must belong to the United States, as its backyard, in the interest of the Washington elites that dominated the way in which that nation, a former colony of the British Empire, was organized. In fact, he took the Monroe Doctrine further yesterday. We may ask why President Donald Trump unleashed such a ferocious expression of American power at every level in his speech yesterday.

This is a historic conflict, as we have often told the world. Our people are quite familiar with it. It is a conflict between the imperialist, interventionist, neocolonialist Monroe Doctrine and the historic republican doctrine of independence, rebellion, dignity, justice, freedom and equality of our liberator, Simón Bolívar. It is an old conflict. It is an old confrontation with an imperialist doctrine seeking to dominate our region. In the nineteenth century, it was our region alone that they wanted to dominate. In the twentieth century, they were already planning to dominate the world. In the twenty-first century, they intend to continue dominating, directing, blackmailing and giving orders to the world as if it were their own property.

In our region this is a 200-year-old conflict and confrontation between the republican libertarian flag — which in the nineteenth century of Simón Bolívar and the liberators advocated a world of balance and respect — and the pro-imperialist, interventionist flags promoting the domination of an entire region by an elite that had already taken control of power in Washington. It is an old, historic conflict, with which we are very familiar. Today Venezuela is the victim of ongoing aggression on the economic, political and diplomatic fronts — and in the media — by those who govern the United States of America. It uses the Monroe Doctrine to justify from an ideological, political and diplomatic point of view the aggression against our beloved homeland, our very raison d'être.

What is the reason for that political, economic and diplomatic aggression against Venezuela? First of all, it is because Venezuela has carried out an independent project of democratic revolution and social redemption and has built its own new social model, founded on our country's historical roots, identity and the very culture of our Latin American region. For 20 years, they have tried to stop the course of history, development and a

revolutionary project that was born from the very roots of the struggles of our people and our region.

Secondly — and this is perhaps more understandable — it is for global geopolitical reasons. Venezuela has the largest internationally certified oil reserve in the world. Venezuela, a founder of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, a country that has been producing oil for 100 years, discovered and internationally certified the world's largest oil reserve. Venezuela also possesses significant natural and mining resources. Today, our country is pursuing the certification of what could be the world's largest gold reserve, based on international standards. The world should know that, in addition to the largest international oil reserve, Venezuela is in the process of having its gold reserve certified as the largest in the world, based on international standards. We are also in the process of certifying what will be the fourth-largest gas reserve in the world. These are significant natural resources in an important geopolitical, economic and strategic location, which has led the oligarchies on our continent and those who dominate from Washington to consider taking over and controlling Venezuela's political power.

Today Venezuela is also the victim of ongoing economic aggression. In the past two years it has been subjected to a series of unilateral, illegal measures of economic persecution and blockade. We have been prevented from using the dollar, the international currency, on the authority of the United States Secretary of the Treasury. Today Venezuela cannot negotiate any international transaction using the dollar. Does the world know that Venezuela is being persecuted economically, commercially and monetarily? Today we are subject to a set of illegal, unilateral economic sanction mechanisms. Yesterday, the President of the United States, from this very rostrum, announced new economic and financial so-called sanctions against our country under the cover of law — international law. Does the United Nations system know that unilateral sanctions that use preferential treatment through currency and financial persecution are illegal under international law?

Venezuela is also subject to ongoing aggression in the media. An attempt has been made to build a file to justify an international intervention. Today we know that plans have been made for an international military intervention to control our country. A case against our country has been constructed in the global media, alleging the existence of a humanitarian crisis and using United Nations concepts to justify permitting a coalition of countries, headed by the Government of the United States and its satellite Governments in Latin America, to get its hands on our country. A migratory crisis has been manufactured in various ways, a crisis that is collapsing under its own weight and that is intended to divert attention from the real migratory crises that exist in the world and demonstrate the degree to which the countries of the South are disadvantaged. The migratory crisis that exists in Central America, in Mexico and in Latin America was triggered by the announcement of a separation wall against our peoples, a wall dividing our peoples. No one wants to talk about that. It is evidence of the double standards in the treatment of the real situation of Latin American and Caribbean migrants, who are contained and persecuted on the border with Mexico, where families have been separated and children kidnapped, yet where there is no interest in addressing or raising awareness about the issue.

There is no interest in drawing attention to the seriousness of the migratory crisis caused by NATO's destruction of Libya, which has led to the migration of thousands, in fact millions, of our African brothers — and of the war against Syria, which has resulted in the migration of people from the Middle East. Instead, an attempt has been made to focus on an alleged migratory crisis in Venezuela through a worldwide media campaign to justify what has been announced for several years — a humanitarian intervention. It is the same kind of plot that was used in the story of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. It is the same kind of plot that justified intervening in other countries but it is now being conducted through a major campaign of brutal psychological warfare.

Today Venezuela is also the victim of diplomatic aggression. Yesterday, my brothers and sisters of the Governments of the world witnessed as the President of the United States made direct threats to cut off and withdraw aid. We witnessed direct threats by the Government of the United States to block aid to international support and assistance systems for the Governments and peoples of the world who need it. We have heard statements from various Governments demanding better mechanisms for access to financing for development, to which our peoples are entitled. The President of the United States yesterday, from this same rostrum, threatened the Governments of the world

by telling them that they must submit to his designs, obey his orders and cooperate with his policies in the United Nations system or suffer the consequences. A ferocious diplomatic offensive has been directed against Venezuela in all the organs of the United Nations system, supported by satellite Governments that kneel and sully the honour of the peoples they claim to represent.

Venezuela has been subjected to continued political aggression. On 8 September, *The New York Times* published evidence of the participation of White House and United States Government officials in meetings on how to promote a military coup d'état and bring about a change of Government, a regime change, in Venezuela. The *New York Times* investigation, which was picked up by *Time* magazine, *The Washington Post* and throughout the world press, is further confirmation of the conspiracy and the ongoing attacks by the Government of the United States against the strong, constitutional democracy — a people's democracy — that is the Venezuelan democracy. We had already repelled, at the time, attempts to carry out violence against our Constitution and to cause riots and attempted military coups against the constitutional and revolutionary Government, over which, thanks to the popular will and vote, I preside in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

After the failure of those apparent attempts to bring about riots and military attacks described in the pages of *The New York Times*, that newspaper detailed how United States officials, supported by the Colombian Government and institutions, met and offered their encouragement and support to that attempt at regime change. Can the United Nations system, can humankind and — I say this to my Latin American and Caribbean brothers — can Latin America and the Caribbean accept such methods, which did so much damage to our region throughout the twentieth century? How many military interventions and coups d'état were there? How many dictatorships were imposed during the long, dark twentieth century in Latin America and the Caribbean? And whom did they favour? The people? Whose interests did they represent? They represented the interests of transnational corporations — interests contrary to those of our peoples. We had to endure long dictatorships, such as that of Augusto Pinochet in Chile, because of the determination of the United States elites who believed in the Monroe Doctrine to deny the right that we had earned to govern ourselves in the way we need to govern ourselves and to build economic, political and cultural systems that were our region's own.

That is why I said that I have come to bring the truth of a people engaged in a struggle. Venezuela is at the centre of a political and media campaign that seems to have no end. That is why we bring the truth of our homeland to the General Assembly.

After the failure of those illegal, unconstitutional and criminal attempts to bring about regime change, published in *The New York Times*; after the democratic presidential election on 20 May, in which this public servant standing before the Assembly today, Nicolás Maduro Moros, obtained 68 per cent of the popular votes in free elections — the presidential election on 20 May was the twenty-fourth election in 19 years, and the Bolivarian revolutionary forces, with varying levels of approval, have won 22 out of 24 elections against the opposition forces in our country; after the failure of the attempts to carry out military coups d'état; and after the failure of the candidacies and electoral tactics supported by Washington, with the immense electoral triumph that the people gave us, on 4 August, I was the victim of a terrorist attack by drones that tried to assassinate me in military style on a main street of the capital city of Caracas. If the attack had been executed as planned — and this is public knowledge — there would have been a massacre and all of Venezuela's institutional, political and military leaders would have been killed.

That same 4 August, the terrorist perpetrators of the drone attack, the first known global drone attack by terrorists, were captured by our State's security and police agencies. All 28 perpetrators were captured through various investigations, and all of them have confessed and been convicted. As has been made public and as various Governments around the world have been informed, all the investigations indicate that the terrorist attack of 4 August was prepared, financed and planned from the territory of the United States of America. Through diplomatic channels, I have made the United States Government aware of the names of the organizers, financiers and planners of the serious terrorist attack of 4 August, and we have given proof of their involvement. All the investigations indicate that the attack and its perpetrators, as they have confessed, were trained and prepared for months on Colombian territory under the protection and support of the Colombian authorities. The latest investigations

and arrests have revealed, as I have made public, that some diplomatic officials of the Governments of Chile, Colombia and Mexico have been implicated by the perpetrators in efforts to facilitate their escape after the terrorist attack was carried out.

I want to ask the United Nations system to appoint a special representative of the Secretary-General to conduct an independent international investigation into the implications of the terrorist attack that our country suffered on 4 August and those responsible for it. Venezuela is open — as are the doors of our country and of our justice system — to establishing direct responsibility for that aggression, which is the most serious to have taken place in our country's political history. Through their involvement, they sought to create chaos in our homeland and to leave the entire State leaderless in order to justify national confrontation and internal violence, thereby rationalizing the implementation of mechanisms outside the multilateral system of the United Nations and military intervention, as other countries have experienced in the past.

Venezuela therefore formally proposes support for an independent international investigation and that the truth about those events be established. Even I have said to the United States Government how good it would be if the United States Government, which has denied its involvement in preparing and in carrying out those attacks, were to heed my appeal that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, together with high-level professionals and experts, take part in the investigation to clarify and help the Venezuelan justice system to determine the truth, and only the truth.

When I arrived in New York today, in the afternoon, I learned that some journalists had asked President Donald Trump if he was willing to meet Maduro — as they call me — Nicolás Maduro, President of Venezuela. It seems that President Donald Trump said in some of his replies today that if that helped Venezuela, he would be willing to do so. I therefore say and affirm to him from this rostrum that, despite the immense historical, ideological and social differences — I am a worker, a bus driver, a man of the people, not a tycoon or a billionaire — despite all the differences, which could be considered immeasurable, I, Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of Venezuela, would be willing to shake hands with the President of the United States and sit down and discuss our bilateral differences and the issues of our region that have been so talked about. That is what I think.

Venezuela is a nation with a tradition of peace. Venezuela is a friendly country. Venezuelans do not hate the United States. On the contrary, we appreciate the United States, its culture, its arts, its society. But we disagree with the imperialist concepts that have taken hold of political power in Washington since the very founding of the nation.

Simón Bolívar was our liberator who wrote, in 1829, almost prophetically: "The United States seems destined by Providence to plague America with miseries in the name of freedom." He had prophetic vision. It must have been hard to see so early what would come to pass in the twentieth century. Do President Donald Trump and I have any differences? Indeed we do. But it is those with differences who should enter into dialogue. It is those with differences who must bring their goodwill and their ability to communicate to the table. President Trump has said that he is worried about Venezuela, that he wants to help Venezuela. Well, I am prepared to discuss, with an open agenda, any topic with the American Government with humility, honesty and sincerity.

As President of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Venezuela flies the flag of the dialogue of civilizations. As President of the Non-Aligned Movement, Venezuela will always promote and participate in international political dialogue and understanding as a way to resolve international conflicts. We advocate political and peaceful means rather than force. Venezuela has invaluable experience in organizations such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in dealing with differences and building consensus and agreement.

Recently in Algeria, we held a meeting on the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee of OPEC. It was an extraordinary meeting, attended by the representatives of the Monitoring Committee, of which our country is one, as well as the representatives of 24 States with the largest oil reserves and the biggest producers of oil. Keeping in mind the cultural, political, geostrategic and geopolitical differences, we reached a consensus — one voice — in order to continue stabilizing the oil market at fair, reasonable and stable prices.

We believe in political dialogue as the way to channel solutions, as the way to resolve conflicts. There have been attempts to demonize the Bolivarian revolution of Venezuela with a brutal campaign never seen before, first against Commander Hugo Chávez

Frías, founder of our revolution and, in the heart of Venezuelans, eternal Commander, and then against this humble man standing here carrying the voice of a people, who supports his revolution and democratically backs his actions. That is why I reaffirm our will to participate in international dialogue and national political dialogue.

I know that there are Governments represented in this Hall that are interested in peace, sovereignty, independence and justice in Venezuela. I open our arms to all those who wish to help us from Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America, while respecting the sovereignty of the country, without intervening in the internal affairs of Venezuela, so that they can support and assist us in a process of sovereign dialogue for the peace, democracy, justice, prosperity and future of Venezuela — a noble nation that deserves peace, a future and more.

We bring good tidings from a country that has not surrendered and will not surrender. We bring good tidings from a nation that is consolidating its democracy. We bring good tidings from a nation that is empowering its people. We bring good tidings from a country that is building its own social model and its own social welfare State with new ways of protecting its elderly, its retirees, its children, its youth, its women, its most vulnerable sectors and its workers. We bring good tidings about our efforts towards economic recovery. In mid-August, we launched an economic programme to bring about growth and prosperity, which is laying the foundation for a new economy that does not depend on oil revenue, but is, instead, diversified and can grow sustainably and build prosperity. We are on our way to a new type of social model.

We believe in a different world. Our generation saw the coming and going of the bipolar world of two blocs and the Cold War — which some, it seems, wish to bring back with attacks against China, Russia and humble countries like Venezuela. Engaging in combat against countries like Russia and China goes against what should be a humanistic international policy that recognizes the emergence of new centres of power and the need to build a multipolar world.

Venezuela advocates and is committed to building a multipolar, multicentric world where the various regions — Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Europe, North America — can coexist in balance and in peace, while respecting each other's cultures, religions, idiosyncrasies, identities and various political and economic models. There is no single economic model. We cannot allow others to impose one particular economic model and way of thinking on us. We cannot allow others to impose a particular cultural or political model on us. Humankind must not all espouse the same uniform way of thought.

We demand the cultural, religious and political diversity of humankind in this world. That is why we advocate the emergence of such a world from the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the emergence of a world of justice. We assume and reaffirm our solidarity with the Arab people of Palestine. There must be justice in Palestine and respect for its historical territories, as established in 1967 by the United Nations. We raise the flag of the Palestinian people.

We support the call of the United Nations for an end to the infamous and criminal 50-year blockade against the people of Cuba. We have had enough of continuing to apply obsolete methods of another era against Cuba. Those same methods are now being applied against other people, such as the Venezuelan people. We will therefore happily vote in the coming days in favour of the upcoming draft resolution to reject the blockade and economic and financial persecution against Cuba and demand that it be lifted immediately.

We have a world to build. We have a world to forge. Two hundred years ago, our region was plagued with colonies, slavery and injustice. One hundred years ago, as a people we strived for freedom. Today, in the twenty-first century, the time for freedom has come — the opportunity has undoubtedly arisen, from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, from the revolutionary ideas of Simón Bolívar and the example and legacy of Commander Hugo Chávez, whose voice still echo in this Hall, clamouring for justice in the world, demanding an end to those imperialist practices of threats, coercion and extortion against our peoples.

Today, we can say that we have lived through 20 years of revolution. The past three years have been the most difficult with harassment, aggression and attacks. We have endured political, media, diplomatic, economic and financial attacks and persecution, and I can say today, on 26 September, that Venezuela is stronger than ever. We have managed to resist and have found strength in our own historical core to still be standing today, victorious and ready to continue building our own social model — that of the socialist revolution

of the twenty-first century. We proclaim it to the four winds. It is a new revolution of independence, dignity and justice. Today we are stronger than ever.

Two days ago we witnessed the tribute to Nelson Mandela (see A/73/PV.5). To speak of Mandela is to speak of rebellion. Mandela has been portrayed as a fool, as someone who did not fight. Mandela is rebellion in the face of injustice. He is courage and bravery. He is a challenge to the oppressors. We consider ourselves to be following the legacy of Nelson Mandela and of the great African leaders who have raised the banner of equality and justice in the face of slavery, racism and colonialism in all of its forms.

We heard the tribute to Nelson Mandela and reflected on how much the world has changed. Only 30 years ago, Mandela was considered a terrorist by the United States Congress of the North American Government. Just a few years ago, Mandela was still on the terror watch list. Does that not sound familiar? Nelson Mandela was a terrorist, he was sanctioned and persecuted, abandoned. How the world has changed. Today, Nelson Mandela is a flag that we embrace with love and conviction. He is a symbol of what is possible if rebellion, struggle and justice can win the noble hearts and minds of people.

I have confidence in the future of humankind. I have confidence in the destiny of my country. I have confidence in the common future of this community, the United Nations. After having survived coup d'état attempts and terrorist attacks, I can still say that I have confidence in human beings and in the future of humankind. From Venezuela, we say to the United Nations that we have confidence in the noble ideals of a people that, like the people of Venezuela, has not surrendered and will not surrender. The Assembly can count on Venezuela for the great causes of the future of the United Nations and the future of a multipolar world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Touadera (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to the Republic of Ecuador, and especially to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, on her well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I can assure her of my country's full support for the fulfilment of her mandate. I would also like to commend Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his work and the remarkable results achieved during the seventy-second session, which have contributed significantly to strengthening cooperation among our States.

I would also like to express my gratitude and reiterate our confidence in Secretary-General António Guterres for his ongoing commitment to peace and development in the world, and especially for the constant and multifaceted support for my country, the Central African Republic. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay a heartfelt tribute to the great African and world leader, Kofi Annan, who passed away on 18 August. I salute his memory and acknowledge his tireless efforts at the helm of the United Nations with a view to building a better world.

This seventy-third session is exploring an important theme. I therefore come to share our contribution in order to ensure that the United Nations remains relevant for all in the context of a global partnership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. In the twenty-first century, that goal requires structural reforms within our Organization, which for more than 70 years has made considerable gains that must be consolidated even if challenges and weaknesses still remain.

The aim of the current session is to promote reflection on how our common Organization should

address the new challenges facing the world and our societies today, such as terrorism, violent extremism, climate change, migration and poverty. The role of the United Nations through the combined efforts of Member States in multilateral action has led to major advances in global peace, security and development.

That was true yesterday for the emancipation of people through self-determination. It is still true today in the search for solutions to increasingly complex problems — violent extremism and international terrorism, the eradication of poverty, the persistence of conflicts in the world, lingering economic and social inequalities, the widening development gap among States and the massive violation of human rights. That is why my country, the Central African Republic, will continue to support the central role of the United Nations in preserving and maintaining peace and security in the world.

The global leadership embodied by the United Nations must be strengthened and equipped with the necessary tools to respond effectively to current challenges, while ensuring a better division of labour among Member States. My country supports the position of the African Union, which seeks Africa's full representation in all United Nations bodies, especially the Security Council, which is the main decision-making body of our common Organization in matters related to international peace and security.

It is high time to correct the historical inequality that continues to deprive Africa of a permanent seat on the Security Council with veto power. In the same vein, my country joins the African voice in supporting an increase in the number of members elected by the General Assembly to the Security Council. That will allow for a fairer and more balanced participation in that organ, which will ensure a more representative role in the promotion of international peace.

The rise of terrorism and violent extremism is a serious threat to international security. It seriously undermines social cohesion in our countries, exposes our populations to indiscriminate violence, generates a succession of humanitarian crises and thwarts development efforts.

Given that grim reality, Africa is showing its willingness to overcome regional divisions, pool resources and lay the foundations for a holistic and coherent approach that contributes to the development of a global doctrine against those prevailing asymmetric threats. That is the best strategy for preventing and combating those scourges through specific responses adapted to our environment within the framework of the global peace and security architecture.

Another concern today is the problematic extent of the migration phenomenon. When well managed, migration can have a substantial positive impact on the development of countries of origin and significant benefits for destination countries. When poorly managed, migration can have serious consequences for the well-being of countries and migrants, with a high probability of destabilizing national and regional security. That is why my country welcomes the holding in December of an intergovernmental conference on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in Marrakech, Morocco, and hopes that the forum will lead to constructive proposals.

On an equally important note, our planet continues to suffer the effects of natural phenomena such as earthquakes, rainfall, drought, the rapid advance of the desert and global warming. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to encourage all States that are signatories to the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to join efforts to preserve our shared environment and to ensure sustainable development for our planet.

I would also like to take this opportunity to discuss the situation in my country, the Central African Republic. But first, I want to honour the memory of all those who have fallen in the exercise of their perilous and noble peace mission in the Central African Republic. I would like to convey the tremendous gratitude of the people of the Central African Republic to the entire international community for all its sacrifices to bring peace to my country.

For two and a half years, my Government has been working tirelessly to restore the fundamental values that underpin democracy, freedom and human rights. To that end, we are working to re-establish State authority by continuing to gradually deploy State administration and services in our provinces and to restore basic social services.

On the other hand, we deplore the continuing tragic and painful attacks perpetrated by the enemies of peace, who are driven by dark and selfish interests. They have been fuelling the bloody violence since the beginning of the year, both in the capital and in the interior of the

country, with an increase in violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Notwithstanding all those challenges, the Government has maintained the momentum of reforms in the security and defence sectors, where significant progress has been made, namely, the gradual deployment of the Central African internal defence and security forces and the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programme.

In that regard, I welcome the commitment made by the European Union and our bilateral partners to supporting the training and bolstering of our defence and security forces, on the one hand, and to supporting the implementation of the national defence plan and the deployment of the Central African Armed Forces, with a view to setting up a garrison army and establishing control throughout the national territory, on the other hand.

We are also eternally grateful to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation and France for the material support provided to the Central African Armed Forces. Our ambition is to see them become truly operational and to contribute, alongside MINUSCA, to the immense effort to stabilize and restore lasting peace to the Central African Republic. But, in order to do so, allow me to reiterate from this rostrum our call for the total lifting of the arms embargo still weighing on our national army.

The reconstruction programme for the Central African Republic requires a coherent framework as embodied in the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, which is being implemented and has already seen the Government and its international partners launch 21 projects regarding basic social services. That tangible progress is the fruit of the multifaceted, invaluable and commendable support of our strategic partners, such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Union and the French Development Agency.

We have also dedicated ourselves to the fight against impunity through substantial support for the rehabilitation of the national judicial system, which, among other things, has enabled our criminal court to hold two sessions this year to try common law cases. Moreover, the Special Criminal Court will soon begin its first investigations, while the Government has established the framework for the Truth, Justice, Reparations and Reconciliation Commission.

In that context, one year since its operationalization in September 2017, the panel of facilitators of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic has concluded two rounds of consultations and a meeting with armed groups to hear their demands for an inclusive dialogue. I am pleased to recall that the African Initiative is the one and only reference framework for all those willing to support the Central African people on the path to dialogue. In that regard, I continue to urge all the friends of the Central African Republic to generously assist us through robust support for the efforts of the panel of facilitators of the African Initiative, whose accomplishments to date must be consolidated. My greatest wish is to enable my compatriots to resolve their differences once and for all in good faith and to strengthen the ancestral ties that bind them.

Today, the Government and the people of the Central African Republic are firmly committed to strengthening the democratic process and the economic recovery in the country. Given the many challenges that beset our history, we will be patient but determined in our actions, vigilant and aware of the magnitude of the task that lies ahead.

For my part, I can affirm my determination to spare no effort to create the necessary conditions for the reconciliation and the reconstruction of my country in order to give back to the Central Africans, my people, the joy and the desire to live together. I extend our eternal gratitude to all our partners and to the entire international community for their ongoing concern for our well-being.

In conclusion, I hope that the international community will remain mobilized alongside the Central African people and work together with the Government for the recovery of my country. I wish our work every success.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Central African Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure, on behalf of the Government and people of the State of Kuwait, to extend my sincere congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session on her election, as well as to her friendly country, Ecuador. I would also like to reassure her of our full support in facilitating her work and fulfilling her responsibilities. We are fully confident of her ability to undertake that task, as her experience in international affairs will have a positive impact on conducting this session's work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my country's sincere appreciation for the outstanding efforts of her predecessor during his able and successful presidency throughout the previous session.

Allow me also to commend the great efforts of the Secretary-General in leading the Organization with visions and ideas for the maintenance of international peace and security based on the purposes and principles of the Charter. We firmly support his reform initiatives, particularly those relating to ways to settle conflicts peacefully, which promote practical rather than theoretical preventive diplomacy. That would be achieved through a United Nations plan that ensures consensus on effective reforms in order for the international organization to play its desired role.

Preventing and resolving conflicts by peaceful means continue to be one of the most important reasons for the establishment of the United Nations. After the bloody experiences of the First and Second World Wars, despite their unprecedented and catastrophic consequences for humankind, those wars constituted the genuine motivation for developing a meaningful international system to protect our present and future generations from the scourge of war.

The United Nations has played a critical and historical role in the past seven decades, during which it has developed its working methods and expanded its mandates to include humanitarian, political, security, development and economic issues throughout the world. However, growing challenges, increasingly severe conflicts and the risks that they pose for international peace and security have shown the urgent need to enhance the ability of the United Nations to adequately respond to the challenges facing our world today. Those challenges include the spread of violence, extremism and terrorism, as well as the dangers pertaining to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the continuous violations of human rights, climate change and others.

The proposals and plans that the Secretary-General has introduced to restructure the Secretariat, with a view to enhancing its effectiveness and increasing its efficiency in order to ensure that its efforts in ending conflicts are not wasted, are a preliminary important step to transform the issue of reform from hypothetical discussion to realistic application. In that regard, we stress once again our support for that step, which is part of the expectations that the peoples of the world have of the Organization, considered to be a safe haven and guarantor of global peace and stability.

Nine months into our non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the period 2018-2019, the State of Kuwait has become increasingly aware of the need to reform the Security Council to make it more capable of shouldering its responsibilities and facing the growing challenges of today's world. The reform must reflect the international reality in which we live and strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of the Security Council, while ensuring permanent Arab representation commensurate with the number of Arab Member States and the size of their contribution to the various activities of the United Nations.

Since its first day as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, the State of Kuwait has adopted an objective approach in addressing various issues on the Council's agenda. Such an approach is a realistic reflection of its foreign policy, which is based on

respect for the sovereignty and independence of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. We also believe in the noble objective of the United Nations, which is that of maintaining international peace and security. Our involvement in the Security Council's agenda was not constrained by any cultural, ethnic, political or geographical consideration, although its agenda is replete with Middle Eastern issues.

Through our non-permanent membership of the Security Council, the State of Kuwait seeks to go beyond routine participation in the work of the Council. We aim to broaden our horizons in order to elevate the sovereignty of international law, with all its branches, including respect for human rights, building a better future for the world's population and avoiding any selectivity or partiality in addressing the various issues. That trend is based on the Charter of the United Nations and on the diplomatic legacy of the State of Kuwait. It gives preference to achieving peaceful solutions and promoting mediation efforts between parties. It reflects how we address the various issues and crises ravaging our world today. Human beings and their inherent rights remain the pillars of our foreign policy, based on the directives of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah — may God protect him — the Emir of the State of Kuwait, who was honoured by the Organization as a leader of humanitarian work.

The Palestinian question is one of the most important and long-standing issues on the agenda of the Security Council. This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the adoption in August 1948 of Security Council resolution 56 (1948). It was the first time the Council addressed that protracted issue. Successive resolutions were adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as multiple international and regional initiatives, to lay the foundations for peace in the Middle East. However, Israel persists in its intransigence and continues to reject and ignore resolutions of international legitimacy. It continues its expansionist policies through the establishment of illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian territories. Such action constitutes a significant challenge to and blatant disregard for implementing resolutions of international legitimacy, the most recent of which is resolution 2334 (2016), which calls on Israel to stop its illegal settlement practices.

Furthermore, Israel continues to desecrate the sanctity of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, in addition to its continued violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, by detaining thousands of Palestinians in its prisons and detention centres and through its repeated military aggressions on the Gaza Strip, during which it does not take into account the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It disregards the agreed international measures under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Given that the State of Kuwait seeks the full implementation of Security Council resolutions, we submitted a draft resolution at the Security Council in May, which repeatedly called on Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately cease the use of illegitimate force against civilians. That draft resolution also called for international protection to ensure the safety and security of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories. Although the draft resolution was not adopted, the State of Kuwait will spare no effort to support the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people until the occupation ends and permanent, just and comprehensive peace is achieved, in accordance with the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, while implementing all relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, which call for the two-State solution and the establishment of a Palestinian State, based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Syrian crisis has entered its eighth year. The international community remains to a large extent unable to find a solution that ends its devastating consequences and horrific losses. Syrian citizens have remained the main victims of a conflict that has claimed the lives of more than 400,000 people, in addition to more than 12 million people who have become refugees and displaced persons.

The State of Kuwait, in cooperation and coordination with the delegation of the friendly Kingdom of Sweden, put forward resolution 2401 (2018) on the humanitarian situation in Syria, which was unanimously adopted by the Security Council. It was a positive sign of the solidarity and unity of the Council to end that human suffering, stop the hostilities and guarantee humanitarian access to those in need in Syria in a timely manner. Yet, today we deplore the fact that resolution 2401 (2018) has not been implemented on the ground.

Such efforts take place in the context of the humanitarian role played by the State of Kuwait to

address the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Syria since the beginning of the crisis. In the course of such efforts, we have hosted three international donor conferences to galvanize support to ease the humanitarian situation in Syria. My country has made voluntary contributions totalling $1.6 billion at those conferences.

In that regard, we reiterate our principled and unwavering position with regard to the Syrian crisis. We reject any military solution to the crisis and stress the need to step up efforts to bring all parties to the conflict together and start a dialogue in order to reach a peaceful settlement, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2254 (2015). The goal is to achieve a political reality agreed upon by all components of the Syrian people. That should preserve the unity and independence of Syria in order to attain the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and ensure that the perpetrators of crimes are brought to justice and enjoy no impunity.

Our brothers in Yemen are facing critical unprecedented challenges, with serious implications at the political, humanitarian and economic levels as a result of the coup d'état against the legitimate authorities by the Houthis in September 2014. The Houthis continue to reject the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as international initiatives to achieve a political settlement. They remain a threat to the security and stability of the region by launching ballistic missiles against the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Such action threatens the safety of navigation at Bab al-Mandab strait and the Red Sea. We strongly condemn such actions, which are contrary to international law and international humanitarian law.

In that regard, we underscore once again our full commitment to respecting Yemen's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, while rejecting interference in Yemeni internal affairs. We stress our full support for the constitutional legitimacy of Yemen, as the cradle of Arab civilization. We also stress the importance of prioritizing the political solution to the crisis by resorting to the three agreed terms of reference: the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the Comprehensive National Dialogue and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

Given Kuwait's preventive diplomacy, which is based on mediation and political settlement, for over 100 days in 2016 my country hosted the political consultations between the Yemeni parties, under the auspices of the United Nations. We underscore our readiness to host our Yemeni brethren for the signing of a final agreement whenever it is reached by Yemeni parties. We stress our ongoing support for the efforts of the United Nations and those of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to achieve a peaceful solution to the crisis without delay.

The coup d'état against Yemen's legitimacy has consequences that play a major role in the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the country. Such consequences have led to frightening and unprecedented statistics. In fact, the Yemeni people continue to suffer, as they struggle to survive daily. The State of Kuwait has not ignored the needs of its brothers in Yemen. We have contributed a total of $350 million. We pledged $250 million of that amount at the Geneva conference in April, where it was handed over in full to the United Nations agencies and its humanitarian bodies. The purpose of that contribution was to mitigate the serious deterioration at the humanitarian, health and economic levels. However, that deterioration will not stop until security and stability in Yemen are restored, which will in turn help to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity and re-establish harmony among all groups in the country.

The growing phenomenon of terrorism and violent extremism in the world, particularly in the Middle East, is an unprecedented challenge that has stricken the world order at its core. It has happened through the ideologies of secretive and rogue organizations, under the cloak of Islam, to achieve their destructive intentions.

The so-called Da'esh terrorist organization has perpetrated savage crimes, including widespread murder and destruction in various areas of the region. In response, the Global Coalition against Da'esh was established, a development for which the State of Kuwait has provided material and moral support, in line with the conventions on combating terrorism adopted by the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations from 1999 to 2001. Our brothers in Iraq were the first to suffer from the crimes of that terrorist organization. Cooperation between the international community, represented by the Security Council and the Government of Iraq, has

played a highly effective role in clearing Iraqi territories of that terrorist and dangerous cancer.

Proceeding from our conviction that post-war peace and security cannot be achieved without redressing the impact of conflicts and their devastating effects, which undermine humankind, my country hosted the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq. At that conference, pledges exceeded $30 billion, of which the State of Kuwait contributed $2 billion. In that regard, we underscore our firm position in favour of providing all forms of support in order to assist Iraq in fulfilling its outstanding commitments under the relevant Security Council resolutions and restoring its role and position in the region and the world.

At the regional level, and based on the same principles of good-neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, we once again call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to adopt serious confidence-building measures to establish relations based on cooperation, mutual respect and common interests. That would serve to direct efforts and capabilities towards promoting development and construction, and would reflect the hopes of all peoples in the region for a life of security and stability.

While confirming what I said earlier about the role that my country has been playing, which is based on prioritizing humanitarian issues, and in response to the tragic situation facing the refugees of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar, the State of Kuwait helped to organize the Security Council visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar. The aim of that visit was to discuss the refugee crisis, become familiar with the situation and assess the steps taken by the authorities of the two countries towards one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. We will pursue our efforts, as a member of the Security Council, to cooperate and coordinate with all parties concerned in order to guarantee the safe, voluntary and dignified return of the refugees and hold accountable all those responsible for crimes committed against them.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is one of the most successful achievements of the United Nations. It complements the efforts of the international community based on the fundamental rules emanating from the Millennium Development Goals, which achieved their noble objectives and spurred the United Nations to shift from defining relative goals for confronting challenges to a comprehensive phase of radical and people-centred solutions.

Meeting our international obligations and achieving global solidarity represent a major leap towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals in order to eradicate poverty in all its forms; ensure that all human beings enjoy equal rights to dignity, education, health and political participation; empower young people and women; and address the effects of climate change in the context of the historic Paris Agreement. Environmental degradation is one of the main obstacles to attaining those Goals, in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility, taking into account the different responsibilities and burdens.

The issue of migrants and refugees is perhaps one of the most prominent challenges facing sustainable development. We therefore look forward to the 2018 international conference on migration, to be held in the city of Marrakech in December, at which the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration will be adopted.

As the State of Kuwait seeks to improve the welfare of people, we have taken effective measures to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a priority of all our national plans and programmes, with the participation of all sectors of society. That was embodied in the future national vision for a new Kuwait to be accomplished by 2035, seeking to transform Kuwait into a leading regional, financial, commercial, cultural and institutional centre.

The State of Kuwait has always shouldered its regional and international responsibilities to achieve development in its various economic, social and environmental dimensions. We have made major strides in implementing the initiatives of His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait to promote international partnerships. Such partnerships complement the ongoing history of Kuwait in the development and humanitarian fields. In fact, Kuwait spared no effort in offering development assistance to developing countries, as well as to least developed countries, totalling 106 countries to date. We play our role as an active Member of the United Nations through our various institutions, in particular the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. We provide grants and soft loans for infrastructure projects in developing countries. Such assistance is more than double the internationally agreed upon percentage.

I would like to underscore that the State of Kuwait is committed to the international multilateral system and to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We believe in the importance and necessity of advancing all efforts to guarantee the continuity and contribution of our long-standing Organization by having all States fulfil their commitments and responsibilities under international conventions and conferences. That will contribute to finding fair and just solutions to global threats and challenges and to accomplishing the lofty goal of maintaining international peace and security.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media, and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media, and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bettel (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Yesterday, our Secretary-General provided his view of the international situation and the challenges that we all face (see A/73/PV.6). His view was a mixed one, to say the least. We are experiencing a decline in multilateralism on all fronts and a challenge to the basis of the international system based on respect for the rule of law.

However, multilateralism and respect for the rule of law ensure that democracies can play an international role. They are even a prerequisite for the exercise of their sovereignty. Nowhere is the need for and evidence of the merits of multilateralism more present than in common projects to establish and maintain peace. The European Union is an excellent example in that regard. I am part of the generation born in Europe that has never experienced war. It appears that we take that for granted. However, we must not forget that there are conflicts just beyond our borders.

The same holds true in the area of international trade. In that regard, the increasing number of multilateral measures and counter-measures will eventually undermine our growth. We are strongly in favour of resuming negotiations and constructive engagement through the World Trade Organization. If that does not occur, all parties are at the risk of losing out. That would entail being open to discussions on sensitive and difficult subjects.

Some challenges can be solved only at the global level. Migration is the best example of that kind of challenge. Demographic trends suggest that it is likely that the issue will be on the agenda for a few generations. We hope that the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration to be adopted in Marrakech in December this year will provide a framework for understanding the global phenomenon in countries of origin, transit and destination. It should also lead to better management of migration flows at the regional level. In the European Union, we know that it should allow for the establishment of common policies and solidarity mechanisms among Member States with regard to accepting refugees. It is regrettable that some countries have forgotten that their citizens were once refugees from somewhere in the world.

My country has made considerable efforts since 2015 to receive asylum seekers, including through resettlement and relocation mechanisms. The global compact's comprehensive framework for migration has made it possible to determine what is expected of countries of origin and destination, but also — and this is very important — what is expected of migrants with regard to their integration.

The issue of integration has often been linked to the rise of populism in Europe. Let me inform the Assembly that countries of various sizes within the European Union, including large ones, had populist Governments

before the 2015 migration crisis. Moreover, those same countries now challenge the founding principles of the European Union pertaining to respect for the rule of law. I would like to note today — and condemn — the fact that some political parties have become successful by exploiting the weakest.

Of course, a clear distinction must be made between political refugees and economic migrants. Those who want to survive — those who flee rape, violence, persecution, imprisonment and death —must be able to find safe haven on our continent.

We have heard warnings from the Secretary-General and from the scientific community: if we continue along the current path, we will not achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. We do not know exactly how much humankind contributes to global warming or to climate change, but we have the facts, which, month after month, year after year, show with certainty that we must act because we have a responsibility to future generations. I can only welcome all initiatives to maintain or restore the momentum of the Paris Agreement, including the Secretary-General's proposal to convene another climate summit next year on the sidelines of the General Assembly.

Managing climate change is one of the most important goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda's 17 Sustainable Development Goals is progressing well, and the international community is engaged, in particular through national plans, keeping in mind that each Member State is free to focus on its own priorities. It is clear that the issue of financing the Sustainable Development Goals remains a problem.

With regard to climate change, specific mechanisms have been developed nationally and internationally and through the private sector. Mechanisms exist but resources remain insufficient. Luxembourg now has a green stock exchange with a capitalization of $50 billion — the largest of its kind. We also have a goal to create similar mechanisms for other Sustainable Development Goals. However, the response of the financial sector remains lukewarm. That is because, first, traditional operators are unaware of the potential of new markets and, secondly, compliance obligations are imposed on supervisory authorities in developed countries.

As we know, the share of official development assistance is decreasing, and other mechanisms must be found to shore up the lack of resources, in particular for the least developed countries. The need to diversify the sources of development assistance cannot relieve us of our official development assistance obligations. For its part, my country will continue to devote 1 per cent of its gross national income to official development assistance.

Like the majority of countries, we experienced a rather challenging period in terms of budgetary matters. Reducing the budget allocated to cooperation would have been welcomed by some. I mention that simply because, in developed countries with considerable income, we wonder if we should have a hot meal or a cold meal but, in some countries, mothers wonder if they will be able to feed their children at all for the next few days. We forget how lucky we are. I believe it is important to share what we have. I know that there is consensus on that issue in my country. Even after legislative elections in two weeks, I believe the consensus will remain and that the next Government will follow suit.

The effectiveness of development aid is of course not only dependent on financial resources. In that regard, the Secretary-General's reform of the development sector has our full support. In particular, the policy and practice of United Nations development agencies should be aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Coordination among agencies, the development of joint projects and the establishment of a new resident coordinator system could give us the flexibility and adaptability necessary for the effective implementation of development projects on the ground.

I highlighted the Secretary-General's reforms because we believe that our country plays a special role in the area of development. However, reforms in the area of peace and security and within the management pillar of the Secretariat are important and should receive the same strong support. Such efforts must succeed because they also contribute to ensuring lasting support for multilateral institutions. Reform in the area of peace and security should enable the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping operations to be more effective and flexible, while bearing in mind that deployment modalities do not always meet needs.

Africa is one of the regions where the United Nations is most present through peacekeeping operations, development assistance and humanitarian programmes and projects. West Africa and the Sahel are now a

hotbed of instability, terrorism, organized crime and trafficking of all kinds. Only through coordinated and concerted action with regional and national stakeholders and international institutions can the burgeoning number of threats in the region be contained. For its part, my country focuses a considerable percentage of its development assistance on countries in that particular region. By way of example, let me outline our efforts in Mali.

Our programme for that country has a budget of €61 million for the period 2015-2019. Luxembourg is one of the main donors to the Office of the Independent Observer, responsible for evaluating the implementation of the ceasefire agreement between the Government and armed groups in the north of the country. Since 2012, it has funded the establishment of the International Commission of Inquiry for Mali to investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. My country also contributes to the development of a compliance framework for respect for human rights and international humanitarian law to be used in operations of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

We allocate approximately €1.15 million to security and defence. Starting this year, my country has also been participating in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and deploys army officers to provide air support. In line with commitments made during the Brussels conference in February, Luxembourg will contribute approximately €500,000 in medical support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and €600,000 to build a field hospital in Sévaré. Luxembourg's contribution clearly remains modest. I would simply like to show what a small country like Luxembourg can contribute when international and regional coordination structures are put in place.

The situation in the Near and Middle East, as well as in the southern Mediterranean region of Libya, inspires less optimism. It must be highlighted that the stalemate in the peace process between Israel and Palestine remains completely unresolved, and the situation, it must be said, has deteriorated since the last session of the General Assembly. We will never tire of recalling the principles of international law that must form the basis for peace. There can be no doubt about Israel's right to exist or about the right of Palestinians to their own State. The two-State solution is the only fair and lasting solution.

The explosive situation in Libya is the result of tensions that are specific to Libya's tribal structure. It is also due to the fact that the country serves as a sounding board for tensions in the Sahel and Arab-Muslim worlds. The interest of the international community, primarily the United Nations and its Special Envoy, is therefore multifaceted. The political solution reached among the Libyan parties will also determine the control of migration flows to Europe. It is obviously not a question of locking up the migrants in camps, in intolerable and disgraceful conditions of slavery, in the twenty-first century.

The war in Syria has led to a huge humanitarian crisis. It has claimed the lives of countless people. Half of the population is displaced, either internally or abroad. After the tragedy of eastern Ghouta at the beginning of the year, more than 3 million people are now threatened in the Idlib region. The means used in the war by the warring parties have been extreme in terms of their violence and cruelty, including the use of chemical weapons, which is both beyond understanding and unacceptable.

It is simply incomprehensible and shameful that the international community has been unable, by means of veto, to renew an instrument designed to establish the facts and responsibiiities for the use of chemical weapons. We hope that the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, established by resolution 71/248, will have access to data collected by the Joint Investigation Mechanism so that it can ensure justice when the time comes.

The humanitarian commitment of my country in the Syrian conflict is by far our most significant and stands at €7.5 million per year for the period 2016-2020, as I personally announced at the conference in London. Luxembourg will also participate in the latest appeal for additional contributions from the Department of Political Affairs in support of the United Nations political efforts in Syria. It will also provide an amount of €200,000 to allow the Mechanism to be operational. The tragedy of the war in Syria has led to a situation that is all the more intractable, especially since it combines the interplay of powers, regional rivalries and religious conflict.

The humanitarian tragedy in Yemen has caused destruction, displacement, hunger and cholera. The war raging there has also been extremely cruel. We must expeditiously put in place the means to establish accountability and fight impunity. The role of the United Nations, in particular its Special Envoy and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is crucial if we are to avoid further aggravating the situation and to pave the way for a political solution.

In the two foregoing conflicts, the regional Powers play an important, although not always positive, role. That is the case for Iran. We share the concerns expressed by the United States and its allies regarding Iran's influence in the Middle East, which is likely to destabilize the situation in many neighbouring countries. From our point of view, however, that does not mean that we should call into question Iran's nuclear deal, which we believe, if not perfect, provides tangible guarantees in the field of nuclear non-proliferation. We regret that the United States has denounced that agreement, which was the subject of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) and continues to bind the international community.

With regard to nuclear non-proliferation, we hope that the process initiated between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with the support of South Korea, will lead to concrete results in the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

In addition to the trend towards unilateralism and the reconsideration of the rule of law, we must unfortunately note a deterioration in the human rights situation across the globe. That is true in conflict situations, where the use of intimidation policies, ethnic cleansing and widespread sexual violence is increasingly common, particularly among non-State actors. It is also true due to the phenomenon whereby the very existence of certain categories of human rights is denied and the legitimacy of certain human rights institutions is being called into question.

The situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar is emblematic of such a development. There is a tangle of ethnic cleansing, massacres, intimidation and rape, with an entire population forced to flee without much that the international community can do, except to organize reception in a neighbouring territory and to simply note the scale of the disaster. In that regard, one of the positive developments is the fact that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has been seized of the situation because more than 700,000 refugees have been driven into Bangladesh, which is a State party to the Rome Statute. We fully support the work of the ICC on that issue, as well as in the other investigations that it conducts.

We do not accept that the legitimacy and the very existence of the Court should be questioned on the pretext of State sovereignty. In accordance with the principle of complementarity, the ICC intervenes only in the event of the failure of States to act.

Our support to the Human Rights Council and its work remains as strong as ever. We see the institution as a fundamental pillar of the United Nations system. The Council can be reformed without challenging its mandate and modus operandi. We have supported efforts in that regard. However, we regret the decision of the United States to withdraw its participation from the Human Rights Council, even though it was a reliable in the defence of human rights at the global level. We hope that reform efforts will continue, and we will also contribute to them from within, if Luxembourg is elected to the Council for the term 2022-2024.

Human rights cover many facets, such as civil and political rights and economic and social rights, to mention only the most traditional ones, but there is also a new category of rights, including sexual rights and reproductive health rights. We regret that the latter are too often undermined not only in their principles but also in their exercise, including through United Nations programmes and projects aimed at giving women and girls control over their lives and access to family planning.

In that context, my country provides financial support to the programmes of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN-Women, as well as the Girls Not Brides initiative, in the amount of €600,000 and €400,000, respectively, for 2019. We also support a UNICEF-UNFPA project to eliminate genital mutilation, which stands at €400,000.

The United Nations gives legitimacy to multilateralism and all other organizations and institutions that call for it. That is why we must tirelessly take up that principle. Only then can we undertake the important work that lies ahead and face the challenges of globalization. A return to the private preserve of nationalism has never been an option for Luxembourg, and neither is it today for anybody — above all, the countries in this Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rutte (Netherlands): In 1999, in his message for the New Millennium, the late Kofi Annan spoke words that still ring true almost two decades later:

> "More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that, my friends, is why we have the United Nations."

Mr. Annan's legacy is one of international cooperation, and of fighting illiteracy, poverty, inequality and climate change as root causes of conflict and human rights violations. Above all, his is a legacy of hope, and a firm belief that progress is the unifying theme in human history. The Millennium Development Goals proved him right, and it is up to us, the leaders of the united nations of the world, to carry this legacy forward and make the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement a reality.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains firmly committed to international cooperation. In fact, we have enshrined the principle in Article 90 of our Constitution, which states that "the Government shall promote the development of the international legal order". That provision reflects our moral compass, but it also reflects our history as an open, seafaring and trading nation, and the fact that our Kingdom consists of four countries, in Europe and the Caribbean: Aruba, Curaçao, the Netherlands and Sint Maarten. We have therefore understood for many centuries the necessity and benefits of a transnational outlook.

That is my core message today. We need a transnational outlook to master the challenges we face. There is no conflict between multilateralism and national interest, but rather the contrary. After all, what country does not benefit from a stable and secure international environment, free and fair world trade, peace instead of armed conflict, prosperity instead of poverty, and equality instead of inequality? And what country can achieve those goals alone?

Those are rhetorical questions, of course, but once we acknowledge that, and we should act in consequence, which means we must embrace multilateralism. To the people of the Kingdom of the Netherlands this has only become more evident in the aftermath of the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17. It remains an open wound for my country, and for all grieving nations that had nationals on board. We are grateful for the support of the international community, as expressed in Security Council resolution 2166 (2014). We hope that together we will see justice done.

In May, the Joint Investigation Team presented conclusive evidence about the origin of the missile launcher that was used to down the aircraft. This has only bolstered our resolve that, in the interest of the victims and their loved ones, the full truth must be revealed, justice served and responsibility accepted. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2166 (2014), we call on all States to fully cooperate with ongoing efforts to this end.

There can be no doubt that the rules-based multilateral order that arose after the Second World War has brought great things to many people. That goes especially for the United Nations and the General Assembly. And yet, for many other countries and peoples, the global order has not brought the same benefits. In many parts of the world, peace, stability and prosperity cannot be taken for granted.

The multilateral system is therefore not perfect, and it is under pressure. The playing field is changing

as we speak. Some countries, for a range of reasons, have begun to embrace a different approach. Sadly, more and more often, compromise is being rejected in favour of polarization and perceived self-interest. We are witnessing a worrisome trend: some countries are shifting from a constructive to a combative approach in the multilateral environment. What is more, rising repression, human rights violations and shrinking freedom worldwide are a grave concern. Accountability is often lacking. And when the multilateral system becomes paralysed, it is innocent people who suffer.

Syria is a case in point. In his most recent annual report, Secretary-General Guterres wrote that "working together multilaterally is not optional; it is the only answer" (*A/73/1, para. 148*). I fully agree. I believe in constructive multilateralism. I believe in the power of principle, not the principle of power, to guide us towards a better future for more people. Our best — perhaps even our only — way forward is not to give in to defeatism and cynicism but to keep working to improve the system, step by step.

In that regard, let me emphasize once again that the Kingdom of the Netherlands firmly supports the Secretary-General's reform agenda and that we applaud its initial results. The recent agreement on United Nations reform sends a strong message of broad support for change. But, as always, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Now we have to put words into action, and by "we" I mean the United Nations itself and all the Member States.

The United Nations system must be made fit for purpose to deliver on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which is the ultimate prevention agenda. Take, for example, the staggering number of 3,000 separate United Nations offices around the world, which is 3,000 arguments that support those who say that multilateralism just creates fragmentation and bureaucracy. The critics are not entirely wrong: United Nations reform should bring down this number by at least a thousand, through co-location, use of shared premises and services, and stronger collaboration. That is a thousand arguments for improving multilateralism, and that is just one example of the broader effort that is required to help the Secretary-General's reform drive succeed.

Another important initiative is the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping agenda. Peacekeeping is at the heart of the United Nations, and we need to keep that instrument up to date. Reforms within the Secretariat and in missions in the field, like the introduction of rotation schemes, will help make peacekeeping missions more effective. For their part, Member States will have to match their words with deeds and money. Supporting change is not a free lunch.

That is why, for example, the Kingdom of the Netherlands was the first Member State to announce funding for a reformed resident coordinator system that will raise the efficiency of the United Nations development system. It is why today I transferred the intellectual property rights of the Dutch Travel Information Portal to the United Nations. That system, which maps the travel movements of terrorists and organized crime syndicates, will now be accessible to all Member States. It is practical steps like those that improve the United Nations, our United Nations.

When we look at the United Nations institutions, we must not mince our words. We must tell it like it is. Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment committed by people working for United Nations missions and organizations is unacceptable in every case and in every place. There are no exceptions. That kind of misconduct undermines the core principles of the United Nations and — as the Secretary-General has rightly pointed out — zero tolerance is the only possible response. We must put the new policies in place without hesitation and act on them. We must make sure that victims feel heard and supported and that whistle-blowers are protected. The United Nations is meant to save and improve lives, not destroy them. Here we must draw a clear line.

Of course, improving the multilateral system is not only about institutions and organizing principles. They are only a means to an end. Above all, it is about what we do and why we do it. Over the years, we have gradually learned that the only way to solve problems is to tackle their root causes. We have learned that systematically reducing poverty demands more than money alone, that ending an armed conflict takes more than Blue Helmets alone, that gender equality and education are essential for peace and development, and that sustainability, climate resilience and international stability go hand in hand. The Sustainable Development Goals are built on that concept of integrated thinking and action.

That brings me to a topic that is very important to me personally and to the Kingdom of the Netherlands: water management and adaptation to climate change.

The global water crisis affects us all, in the form of increasing droughts, floods or pollution. As a member of the former High-level Panel on Water, I hope that the agenda for water action we presented earlier this year will inspire others to scale up their action on water. We need to give the value of water greater weight in the economic, social, environmental and other choices we make.

For the Kingdom of the Netherlands, that is self-evident. Amsterdam airport is the only airport in the world that lies below sea level — over four metres below sea level, in fact. So those present can imagine that rising sea levels and the increase in extreme weather are of serious concern to us, as they are for the Caribbean parts of our Kingdom, which are especially vulnerable during the hurricane season.

It goes without saying that we welcome the recent announcement of the new Global Commission on Adaptation. We are proud to be hosting the launch event in my home town of The Hague on 16 October. Of course, we look forward to next year's climate summit in New York because it should provide a platform to delve deeper into the links among climate resilience, financing and security. Climate and water are, by their nature, issues that can be dealt with only multilaterally, using an integrated approach. The Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 set clear objectives. However, water cuts across all the SDGs. What we need now is international transparency, fair market mechanisms and a level playing field so that all countries can do their part in adapting to climate change.

During last year's election of Netherlands United Nations youth representatives, the young candidates were asked what global issue they would address first if elected. Members of the Assembly might expect an answer like world peace, eradicating poverty or ending war. But one of them said:

> "I would tackle cynicism first. We can change things, but we have to believe we can, roll up our sleeves and get started. Cynicism will get us nowhere."

We all should take inspiration from those words. It is easy to be cynical and criticize the multilateral system. It is harder to make improvements and reforms that will take us forward, step by step. But constructive multilateralism is the only way to make progress. That is what we are working for, and not only as a member of the Security Council until 31 December, but also afterwards and in other international forums. To that end, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will stand as a candidate for the Human Rights Council for the 2020-2022 term. We will proceed in the spirit of Kofi Annan, who once said that we need to keep hope alive and strive to do better.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Norway.

Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Solberg (Norway): In 1945, we established the United Nations. We pledged to save future generations from the scourge of war, to work together to promote economic and social advancement, and to uphold and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Our job is not done. Challenges remain, but progress can and must be made.

Our common global interests are also national interests. We can achieve more when we act together. Both our prosperity and many of our challenges are the result of global trends. Trade conflicts, violent extremism, climate change and instability at the global level directly affect us at home, but so do also the benefits of world trade, the global fight against infectious diseases and the rule of law.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals recognize that global challenges are national challenges and that they are closely interlinked. The Goals require us to take both national and international action. We must deal with the challenges of globalization, while at the same time maximizing the benefits to our citizens. Our job as leaders is to deliver security, jobs, education and

health care. Working together has enabled us all to do far more than we could have done alone.

Norway has taken national and international action through our national policy to promote sustainable livelihoods, through our Nordic and European partnerships on economic and civic integration, and through global action to promote peace and security, the sound management of the oceans, fair and regulated trade, education for all and global health measures. Together, we have achieved impressive results, because international cooperation works. Extreme poverty has been halved, people live longer, child mortality rates are falling and more girls attend school than ever before. Global political cooperation, global trade and international law have been crucial to that progress.

We have to recognize that globalization has not been equally beneficial to all. That is a very real challenge. Exclusion can spur radicalization. It can undermine confidence in international institutions and cooperation. Eventually, it could weaken respect for international law, human rights and even our security architecture. To counter that, we must secure the future welfare of a rapidly growing population. That requires both the protection and reform of fundamental trade norms. We cannot afford to let protectionism, discrimination and economic rivalry define our future. The World Trade Organization is essential for Norway and our interaction with the world. I believe that rules-based trade is just as important for our partners. Free trade creates winners. Protectionism does not.

In order to benefit all, rights, rules and responsibilities must be modernized to fit our current global economy. That is vital if we are to build a world where people's potential, creativity and hopes for the future can be realized through cooperation, the exchange of knowledge and trade. Increased protectionism forces us to reflect on what less international cooperation would entail.

As we agreed in 1945, all nations must unite in a commitment to maintaining international peace and security. The consequences of instability affect us all. Global security threats require global responses. The Security Council must be able to act, and so must we, as nations and as regional organizations. Areas of conflict and instability are breeding grounds for violent extremism and international terrorism.

The conflict in Syria is but one example. Many different actors, State and non-State alike, are involved. Banned weapons of mass destruction have reappeared. Humanitarian access is obstructed. Respect for human rights and international law is undermined. On my own continent, Europe, fundamental rules and principles of international law are now in jeopardy. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders must be restored. Violent extremism, conflict and instability lead to humanitarian crises and violations of human rights. Those in turn are some of the main drivers of both regular and irregular migration. Terrorism and violent extremism affect us all and are not limited to any single ideology, religion or belief.

Norway is standing up against violent extremism and terrorism, not in response to individual incidents but as a long-term foreign policy commitment. We are one of 79 members of the Global Coalition against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. By working together, we have achieved significant results on the ground. Still, in the continued fight against violent extremism, we must apply a whole-of-society approach. We must address the root causes, in the Middle East and elsewhere, including in our own countries and on our own continents. We must bring individual perpetrators to justice and prevent impunity.

Norway believes that those responsible for grave violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable. We remain a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court as an independent institution. At the same time, security is closely linked to sustainable development. We must boost trade and job creation, build capacity for generating domestic revenue, strengthen public service delivery and combat corruption. Corruption fuels inequality, crime, instability and violence.

Conflict can reverse years of social and economic progress. Conflict prevention, peacekeeping and disarmament are all vital if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We should heed the Secretary-General's call for a surge in peace diplomacy. Norway is doing its part. Since the end of the Cold War, conflict mediation and resolution have been a cornerstone of our foreign policy. For more than 25 years, we have been engaged in efforts to resolve conflicts around the world — from the first Oslo Accord in 1993, to the ongoing work in Colombia and the Philippines, and back to the Middle East.

We have learned an important lesson from our efforts. Negotiating a peace agreement is always difficult, but implementing the agreement is even harder. In fact, conflict recurrence is more common than the onset of new conflicts. That means that the best way to prevent conflict is to ensure that peace is sustainable. Norway remains committed in Colombia, the Philippines and elsewhere, just as we remain committed to helping to achieve a negotiated two-State solution between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrated the unique value of the United Nations. We have agreed on a universal development agenda — a road map to the world we want. The SDGs are closely interlinked. Achieving Goal 16 on peace, the rule of law and strong institutions is crucial to ensuring that funds are not lost to corruption, and achieving the SDGs related to economic conditions will make funding available that can be used to make progress on other Goals. But we have no time to lose. Sustainable change cannot be brought about overnight. National ownership is critical, but civil society, the private sector, trade unions and the scientific community all have a catalytic role to play.

Health is an area where it is easy to see that the SDGs apply to us all. Health is both a human right in itself and a prerequisite for development. Investing in national health systems is expensive, but failing to do so can prove even more costly. The World Health Organization is working to create a global action plan for a simpler health architecture. That is a response to an initiative launched by Ghana, Germany and Norway. The action plan will be presented in Berlin in October.

Prevention saves lives, reduces human suffering and enhances economic and social development. Norway is proud to be hosting the first replenishment conference of the Global Financing Facility in Oslo on 6 November, and will contribute substantially. Progress on one SDG will stimulate progress on others. For example, child mortality rates fall when mothers have an education.

However, there are still more boys than girls who get an education. We have to put girls at the centre of our education efforts. But just going to school is not enough. That is why Norway has focused on teaching quality and learning outcomes. Ensuring quality education requires continued international financing, and the financing gap is considerable. It is therefore important to mobilize domestic resources and private funding, alongside official development assistance. Norway is doing its part. So far this year, we have allocated approximately $440 million to global education, and we will now increase our support to education efforts targeting girls, to nearly $40 million for the period 2018-2019.

Clean and healthy oceans that are sustainably harvested are a prerequisite for reaching the SDGs. Fifty per cent of the world's oxygen comes from the oceans. Thirty per cent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions are absorbed by the oceans. Our oceans offer us enormous renewable resources and represent a source of great promise and economic potential. Almost half of the world's population already depends on the oceans for nutrition and employment, but in order to ensure a sustainable ocean economy, we must produce more from the oceans.

However, the sustainability of our oceans is threatened. By 2050, they could contain more plastic than fish. Marine litter is one of the fastest growing environmental concerns. Since I started speaking, a further 200 tons of plastic have ended up in the sea. The United Nations Environment Assembly has taken a bold step and adopted a vision of zero discharge of plastic litter into the ocean. Now we must translate that into action. Managing our oceans sustainably is crucial. Increased global funding is imperative and Norway will dig deep to contribute. We have no time to lose.

That is why, earlier this week, I established the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, made up of Heads of State and Government from all continents. We aim to promote science-based decision-making in the fields of ocean economy and ocean management. We will cooperate closely with the United Nations Special Envoy for the Ocean and other ocean initiatives. We aim to present our report in 2020.

For seven decades, Norway has been a consistent supporter of the United Nations and the rules-based multilateral order. We are one of the largest financial contributors to the United Nations. We consistently allocate 1 per cent of our gross national income to development aid. There is broad support for the United Nations and for our engagement in sustainable development and peace across the political spectrum.

In 2021 it will have been 20 years since Norway previously held a seat on the Security Council. We

are ready to serve again. If we are elected, we will work to make the Security Council more transparent, efficient and representative. We will work with other Member States, regardless of their size, wealth or geographical location, to find common solutions. We will draw on our experience in peace and reconciliation processes. As women's rights and participation are crucial to lasting peace and stability, we will keep that issue high on our agenda. Together with partners from many regions, Norway will support initiatives for sustainable oceans and forests. We will highlight the consequences of climate change and the links between security and sustainable development. We will promote reform of the Council to make it more transparent, representative and better equipped to deal with current global realities. Norway will continue to be a consistent partner of the United Nations. We will continue to seek common solutions to the challenges that we face in our shared future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Norway for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Several representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind them that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): We have asked for the floor to respond to the statement made yesterday in the general debate by the Prime Minister of Armenia (see A/73/PV.7). The initial impression was that the speaker — while still under the influence of what he called the Velvet Revolution and driven by populist and highly contradictory rhetoric — confused the General Assembly with the streets of Gyumri and Yerevan. While the Prime Minister of Armenia was not fastidious in his choice of words in blaming the ousted Government of his country for authoritarian rule, corruption and the suppression of democracy and human rights, his comments about the ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan differed little from the phraseology that has been stubbornly used by his predecessors in the past. As a consequence, the statement of the Armenian Prime Minister was yet another useless attempt to deny the facts and responsibility for unleashing the war against Azerbaijan and its devastating consequences.

It is well known that Armenia used military force to seize part of the territory of Azerbaijan, including the Nagorno Karabakh region, the seven adjacent districts and some exclaves, and to set up the subordinate racist minority regime there. The war waged by Armenia claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, ruined cities, towns and villages, and resulted in the forcible expulsion of more than 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes and property, while thousands of people went missing in connection with the conflict. The claims and misinterpretations that we heard in the statement delivered by the Armenian Prime Minister were particularly astonishing given that they were expressed in the United Nations, whose Security Council adopted four resolutions condemning the use of force against Azerbaijan and the bombardment and occupation of its territories, while reaffirming respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory.

Furthermore, in response to Armenia's territorial claims and forcible actions, the Council has reconfirmed that the Nagorno Karabakh region is an integral part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories. In other words, in its resolutions the Security Council has acknowledged the fact that acts of military force have been committed against Azerbaijan and that such acts are unlawful and incompatible with the prohibition of the use of armed force in international relations, and in contradiction to the Charter of the United Nations and its purposes, and that they constitute an obvious violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

It was no surprise that, in his speech, the Prime Minister of Armenia deliberately passed over the relevant Security Council resolution in silence. Likewise, he also omitted any mention of other important international documents adopted in connection with the conflict. The declared commitments and deeds of Armenia have always been at odds with the objective of the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The statement of the Prime Minister of Armenia was no exception. In reality, in having used military force to occupy the territory of a sovereign State, Armenia has demonstrated its

firm conviction in the existence of an alternative to a political solution.

Allegations concerning a new mythical genocidal threat against the Armenian people represent another falsehood. Suffice it to say that, unlike Armenia, which has implemented a policy of total ethnic cleansing of all non-Armenians from both its own territory and the occupied areas of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan has preserved its ethnic and cultural diversity to the present day and is home to tens of thousands of Armenians living in peace, harmony and dignity in the capital city of Baku and other parts of the country. All statements by the Armenian leadership about democracy, human rights and the peaceful settlement of the conflict are preposterous and will remain mere words unless they are translated into real action that would end the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and ensure the return of forcibly displaced Azerbaijanis to their homes and property in the Nagorno Karabakh region and other occupied districts of Azerbaijan in safety and dignity. The achievement of that objective, which is imperative and not subject to compromise, will create the necessary conditions for addressing other issues with the direct, equal and full participation of both communities concerning the Nagorno Karabakh region within the Constitutional and legal framework of Azerbaijan.

Armenia's policy of annexation and colonization has no chance of succeeding. The Nagorno Karabakh region has always been and will remain and inseparable part of Azerbaijan. The military occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan is temporary and will never produce the political outcome desired by Armenia. Yerevan must cease its futile attempts to mislead its own people and the international community, engage constructively in the conflict-settlement process and comply with its international obligations.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): It was not my intention to take the floor. However, I am forced to use my right of reply to respond to the accusations that were aired just now in the General Assembly.

First and foremost, I would like to put everything frankly and note that there is no conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The conflict is between the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, also known by its new name — the Republic of Artsakh — and the Republic of Azerbaijan. I would like to remind the Assembly, but especially our Azerbaijani colleagues, as I am really surprised by their logic in turning the truth upside down. Let me remind them of a few important phases of history.

The first attacks on the peaceful population of Nagorno Karabakh were carried out by the authorities of Azerbaijan. The attacks were afterwards turned into a full-scale war against the population of Artsakh. Azerbaijan used heavy artillery, tanks and every possible weapon they could to destroy and annihilate the population of Nagorno Karabakh. Luckily, and not surprisingly, they lost. Nagorno Karabakh won that war and, in order to secure its right to life, it had to fight. It fought and won. Moreover, on 10 December 1991, Nagorno Karabakh declared, through a referendum, its independence from Azerbaijan in the same way in which Azerbaijan declared its independence from the former Soviet Union.

The Azerbaijan representative mentioned the racist accusations levelled at the Armenian authorities, but let me recall the racist accusations made by the Azerbaijani leadership, including the President, who has always said that every Armenian in the world is an enemy of Azerbaijan. They are changing the situation by turning themselves into victims and putting the entire blame on Armenia, Armenians or anything Armenian in the world.

Let us look at the current military preparations of Azerbaijan. The constant shelling on the border with Armenia and the ceaseless shelling and sniper fire on the Nagorno Karabakh contact line are showing the true face of Azerbaijan. Nagorno Karabakh has never been and will never be part of Azerbaijan. It is an independent republic with a full-fledged Government and many more democratic institutions than Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan should reacquaint itself with the Charter of the United Nations and remember that the aggressor, first and foremost, is Azerbaijan. The whole thing began as a result of Azerbaijan's aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

Concerning the myth of genocide, it began not only with the massacres of every Armenian person living in Sumgait, Baku and Kirovabad 20 to 30 years ago, but were also carried out in the early years of Soviet power in Azerbaijan, when Armenians were killed in Baku and attacked in Shushi. There is a real threat to the people living in Nagorno Karabakh. That is why no Armenian or any other ethnic minority, for that

matter, would be willing to live under the occupation of Azerbaijan.

Everything said by the Azerbaijan representative is false. Let me address, at least, one particular issue. The assertion that tens of thousands of Armenians are living in Azerbaijan is false. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, established by the Council of Europe, has reported on numerous occasions, based on its visits with and studies of the Azerbaijani population, that, at most, 20 to 30 Armenian people currently live in Azerbaijan in mixed marriages. The words of the representatives of Azerbaijan — whether in this Hall or in Baku — never correspond to the realities on the ground. Whatever is said is based on lies and wishful thinking.

It is most important not to deliberate those issues here and invoke various stories that, as I mentioned, have been fabricated, but to stick to the peace process. It will be very important for the Azerbaijani side to be sincerely engaged in the peace process. The only mandated peace process, which is also mandated by the United Nations and the Secretary-General, is the co-chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Minsk Group. Negotiations have been conducted within that framework for many years, and they have yielded many results, but in order to achieve final results, we need the sincere participation of Azerbaijan, while forgetting any possible military solution and being sincerely active in peaceful negotiations.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): The unfortunate comments just made by the representative of Armenia, which were full of the usual distortions and falsifications, are illustrative of the consistent attempts of that Member State to deny the facts that point to its policy of aggression, hostility, hatred and falsifications. It was precisely the Armenian armed attacks on areas within Azerbaijan that led to the series of four Security Council resolutions and relevant presidential statements. The demand for the cessation of hostilities was first and foremost directed at the invading Armenian forces. It was Armenia that intentionally disregarded the demands of the Security Council for the immediate cessation of all military activities and hostile acts for the purpose of establishing a stable ceasefire.

The events that unfolded prior to and in the aftermath of the adoption of each resolution make it clear that Armenia's allegations are baseless and leave no doubt as to who was responsible for the continued armed hostilities and to whom the demands of the Security Council were exclusively addressed. Clearly, the claims of Armenia run counter to the norms of international law and are without foundation. It is well known that the Nagorno Karabakh region and the seven surrounding districts of Azerbaijan are under Armenian military occupation. Indeed, Armenia used military force to occupy the territory of Azerbaijan and establish a subordinate regime on it. That regime is entirely unrecognized as such. It is under the direction and control of Armenia and is ultimately nothing other than the product of aggression, racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing. Consequently, the illegality of that regime and its structures has been repeatedly confirmed at the international level.

Armenia's policy of aggression and territorial claims are not only a threat to peace and security, but also are one of the main causes of the deep political crisis and the dire economic situation in that country. The international community would undoubtedly be interested in hearing from the delegation of Armenia about the real problems that the country is facing in the socioeconomic sphere, including a significant dip in major sectors of the economy in recent years and a high rate of migration of its citizens from the country.

However, neither the Prime Minister or the representative of Armenia mentioned in their statements any efforts the Government is taking to address those challenges and implement the Sustainable Development Goals. They prefer to keep silent on that simply because they have nothing to say. We have repeatedly stated this before, and I would like to stress once again, the sooner the Government of Armenia realizes the lack of any prospect of success for its dangerous political agenda, the sooner the conflict will be resolved and all countries and peoples will be able to benefit from peace, stability and cooperation.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): Basically, I need only recall any newspaper or any media outlet of 30 years ago, when every detailed description was presented concerning developments in the massacre of the Armenian population in Azerbaijan, including the detail of who attacked whom first, how things started and the source of the conflict. As I said, it is most important that people read the newspapers of 30 years ago, not today's newspapers because today's Azerbaijani newspapers are merely lying about everything that happened 30 years ago. Unfortunately, there is not a single person, human

rights activist, human rights defender or independent journalist who will be able to speak freely or accurately in Azerbaijan because everyone who speaks accurately is behind bars these days.

The Security Council requested that Armenia use its influence to stop the hostilities, which it did, and the hostilities were stopped on 4 May 1994, when the Azerbaijani Government itself was willing to sign a ceasefire agreement with the de facto authorities of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. Armenia was a co-signer of that document, and the other main parties were, as I said, Azerbaijan and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic authorities.

It is awful to see what is currently happening in Azerbaijan. Because the authorities of Nagorno Karabakh are very open and sincere in their democratic values, anyone from any country of the world visiting the Nagorno Karabakh Republic — whether for tourism or official business — is blacklisted by the Azerbaijani authorities, who limit their freedom to travel and freedom of movement. I should also add that the Nagorno Karabakh authorities are fully and unilaterally abiding by the United Nations rules. The Nagorno Karabakh authorities have unilaterally ratified all of the important United Nations conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and many other important documents. In addition, Nagorno Karabakh will soon present its voluntary national review for the high-level political forum of the Economic and Social Council on its progress with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The threat to security in the region is coming from a single source — Azerbaijan. That threat is further exacerbated by the fact that at least 1,000 Azerbaijani citizens have been fighting in the so-called Azerbaijani Brigade of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, who occasionally have appeared on the border with Armenia; who declared that they would leave Raqqa to fight against Nagorno Karabakh during the April 2016 war, which was unleashed by Azerbaijan against the peaceful population of Nagorno Karabakh; and who luckily, not surprisingly and very logically lost once again.

In conclusion, and most important, as I said, peace negotiations are carried out within the framework of the co-chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Minsk Group. The main principles that have been put forward are the following: the non-use of force or threat of the use of force, territorial integrity and the equal rights and self-determination of people. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan always forgets about self-determination and puts its territorial integrity first. I recall that any future solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict has to be found within the framework of negotiations, based on those three most important principles.

The meeting rose at 10.35 p.m.